

Claudia Bill-de la Peña  
Mayor

April 15, 2021

Hon. Scott Weiner  
Chair, Senate Housing Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2209  
Sacramento, CA 94249

**RE: SB 6 (CABALLERO) LOCAL PLANNING- HOUSING IN COMMERCIAL ZONES-OPPOSE**

Dear Chair Weiner:

On behalf of the City of Thousand Oaks, I respectfully oppose SB 6. This bill known as the Neighborhood Homes Act, would allow lots zoned for office or retail commercial use, called “neighborhood lots” to be up-zoned for residential use. This bill would:

- Require housing development to meet or exceed the density deemed appropriate to accommodate affordable housing.
- Expand the state’s ministerial housing approval process to include commercial properties that have been vacant or less than 50% occupied for at least three years.
- Subject the development to local zoning, parking and design ordinances.
- Authorize local governments to establish a Community Finance District to provide for and maintain public infrastructure.

The popularity and ease of online retail has resulted in a number of store closures resulting in abandoned retail sites and offices. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the “stay-at-home” order, online sales have never been more popular. While I concur that the State is experiencing a housing shortage, SB 6 should be an optional tool not a state mandated requirement.

SB 6 would require the density for neighborhood lots to meet or exceed the density deemed appropriate to accommodate housing for lower income households including a density of at least 20 units per acre for a suburban jurisdiction. This bill would force cities to approve high density housing projects in areas that cannot accommodate higher densities. While the bill states that a new development must adhere to objective zoning, subdivision and design review standards, regrettably, no such standards exist for housing in commercial zones.

If commercial properties have been vacant or less than 50% occupied for at least three years, this bill would allow ministerial approval. High density projects are always subject to public hearings and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. SB 6 eliminates such important requirements.

Finally, this bill does not address the potential economic impacts of up-zoning neighborhood lots. Commercial zones generate sales and business tax revenue which the Cities heavily rely upon. Conversion to residential may have a detrimental effect on local general fund revenue and impact local services.

While the project may yield more housing, it fails to recognize the hardship on the remaining 50% of businesses/tenants who will need to temporarily or permanently relocate, and perhaps may be forced to close, resulting in job losses. As communities begin to recover from the pandemic, additional business closures and layoffs will simply add to the strain of the local economy.

Cities should maintain the ability to determine if such rezoning is the right solution for their community.

For these reasons, I oppose SB 6.

Sincerely,



Claudia Bill-de la Peña  
Mayor

cc: Senator Anna Caballero [Jeffrey.roth@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.roth@sen.ca.gov)  
Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin  
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