

SUSTAINABLE TAMALMONTE

215 Julia Ave
Mill Valley, CA 94941

July 5, 2020

Honorable Laura Friedman
California State Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: OPPOSE SENATE BILL – 995

Dear Chair Assembly Member Laura Friedman and Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources,

We strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 995.

Senate Bill 995 would expand the application of streamlining the CEQA process to smaller housing projects that include at least 15 percent affordable housing. It also would broaden application and utilization of the Master Environmental Impact Report (MEIR) process, thereby reducing environmental protections.

CEQA authorizes the preparation of a master EIR and authorizes the use of the master EIR to limit the environmental review of subsequent projects that are described in the master EIR, as specified.

Limiting environmental review on housing projects that are described in a master EIR confers what is essentially a CEQA free pass on those housing projects relating to cumulative impacts and alternatives.

Such CEQA streamlining removes the ability of local governments to be fully informed of the project's potential environmental consequences. Without that review, a local government would not be properly informed of traffic impacts, air impacts, or compatible use issues. It is unacceptable for the public to live with the consequences of a housing project that would not be fully vetted and whose impacts were not mitigated and alternatives not considered.

The California Environmental Quality Act, which became law in 1970, is our state's landmark environmental law. Its purpose is to foster transparency and integrity in public decision-making while ensuring land use decisions take the full impacts of development on our natural and human environments into account. It is one of the most powerful environmental protection laws in the nation.

CEQA gives the community a voice in land use decisions. It requires decision-makers to adopt alternatives or mitigation measures to reduce significant adverse environmental impacts. As such, it plays a critical role in preserving and enhancing California's public health, safety, and the environment.

The Act was designed to ensure that a project applicant—not the public—bears the costs of providing the necessary infrastructure to support a project. It also provides the public and decision-makers with “the big picture” and helps ensure that many small projects are not considered separately, only to overwhelm a community when taken as a whole.

CEQA protections should be strengthened rather than further weakened.

Once again, we strongly urge you to oppose SB-995.

Thank you in advance for your conscientious consideration.

Very truly yours,

/s/

Sharon Rushton, Chairperson

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