

The Honorable Scott Wiener
California State Senate
State Capitol Building, Room 4066
Sacramento, CA 95814
VIA FAX: 916-651-4911

RE: SB 827 (Wiener) Planning and Zoning.
Notice of Opposition (as introduced 1/3/18)

Dear Senator Wiener:

The City of Hermosa Beach strongly opposes SB 827 (Wiener), which would exempt certain housing projects from locally developed and adopted height limitations, densities, parking requirements, and design review standards.

Specifically, SB 827 would undermine locally adopted General Plans, Housing Elements (which are certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development), and Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS). SB 827 allows private for-profit housing developers and transit agencies to determine housing densities, parking requirements, and design review standards within one-half mile of a “major transit stop,” or along a “high-quality transit corridor” within a quarter mile of a high quality transit stop (Note, at this time with recent amendments to the bill it appears that no corridors in Hermosa Beach would currently be considered high transit corridors. However, the bill would certainly discourage the City from working with regional transportation agencies to upgrade local transit corridors should it result in State mandated pre-emptive zoning measures in adjacent residential areas). Under existing law, cities are already required to zone for densities at levels necessary to meet their entire Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Additionally, SB 827 would provide developers a means to generate additional profits without any requirement to build affordable housing.

The City of Hermosa Beach recently adopted PLAN Hermosa, the result of a community based process to amend and update its General Plan, which was, in part, funded by the Strategic Growth Council as its emphasis is on sustainability and planning for limited growth in a strategic manner and implementation of integrated land use and transportation strategies to reduce our carbon footprint. Hermosa Beach is already a very dense residential community with substantial housing already available in a very small city, and this bill could undermine our recent planning efforts to align our development policies with state goals, and could possibly result in higher density housing in a manner that would be completely inconsistent with this recent planning effort. We are also concerned with the potential impact of this bill on neighboring cities for the same reason, and concerned that the bill might actually discourage cities from supporting and investing in transit improvements on transit corridors if the outcome would result in State pre-emption of local zoning rules in nearby residential areas.

Exempting development from General Plans, Housing Elements, and zoning ordinances goes against the principles of local democracy and public engagement. Public hearings allow members of the community to inform their representative of their support or concerns when planning documents are developed. Public engagement also often leads to better projects. Disregarding such processes will increase public distrust in government and could lead to additional ballot measures dealing with growth management, and further opposition to the creation of high quality transit corridors.

For these reasons, the City of Hermosa Beach joins our neighboring cities and strongly opposes SB 827.

Sincerely,

cc: Local Senator & Assembly Members
Senate Transportation and Housing Committee, FAX: (916) 445-2209
Senate Governance and Finance Committee, FAX: (916) 322-0298
League Regional Public Affairs Manager (via email)
Meg Desmond, League of California Cities, cityletters@cacities.org