
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Senator Aisha Wahab, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1206	Hearing Date:	7/15/2025
Author:	Harabedian		
Version:	6/24/2025 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Hank Brady		

SUBJECT: Single-family and multifamily housing units: preapproved plans

DIGEST: This bill requires each local agency to develop a program for the preapproval of single-family and multifamily residential housing plans for public use.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires each local agency to develop a program for the preapproval of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by January 1, 2025, as follows:
 - a) Establishes that the local agency must:
 - i) Accept ADU plans for preapproval from any applicant without restriction; and,
 - ii) Approve or deny the application for preapproval pursuant to applicable state and local housing regulations.
 - b) Allows the local agency to charge the applicant permitting fees for the review of the plans submitted for preapproval, as long as the fees are the same as those that would be charged to review the plans if a standard ADU application were filed;
 - c) Requires the local agency to post the preapproved ADU plans on the agency's website, with the contact information of the party that submitted the plans included. The posting of the plans shall not be considered an endorsement of the applicant, or an approval of the applicant's application. The local agency is required to remove preapproved plans within 30 days, at the applicant's request; and

- d) Allows the local agency to admit ADU plans developed and approved by the local agency independently of this program, into the preapproved ADU program.
- 2) Requires a local agency to approve or deny an application for an ADU ministerially and without discretionary review within 30 days, if the applicant uses either of the following:
 - a) ADU plans preapproved pursuant to the program established in 1), as long as they were approved by the local agency within the current triennial California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) rulemaking cycle.
 - b) ADU plans that are identical to a plan that was preapproved pursuant to 1), as long as they were approved by the local agency within the current CBSC rulemaking cycle.

This bill:

- 1) Requires each local agency to develop a program for the preapproval of single-family and multifamily residential housing plans by July 1, 2026, as follows:
 - a) Establishes that the local agency must;
 - i) Accept single-family and multifamily residential housing plans for 2-10 units for preapproval from any applicant without restriction; and
 - ii) Approve or deny the application for preapproval pursuant to applicable state and local housing regulations.
 - b) Allows the local agency to charge the applicant permitting fees for the review of the plans submitted for preapproval, as long as the fees are the same as those that would be charged to review the plans if a standard permit application were filed;
 - c) Requires that an application for preapproval includes a statement by the applicant indicating that the applicant has sufficient authority, license or ownership in the plan to submit the plan for preapproval, as specified.
 - d) Requires the local agency to post the preapproved plans on the agency's website, with the contact information of the party that submitted the plans included, as specified.
 - e) Allows the local agency to admit plans developed and approved by the local agency independently of this program into the preapproved program.

- f) Provides that a local agency is not required to post a plan that is not submitted by an applicant.
- 2) Requires a local agency to approve or deny an application for a single-family or multifamily housing development ministerially and without discretionary review within 30 days if the lot for which the application is proposed meets the soil conditions, topography, flood zone, zoning regulations, and design review standards for which the preapproved plan was designed and the applicant uses either of the following:
 - a) Plans preapproved pursuant to the program established in 1), as long as they were approved by the local agency within the current triennial CBSC rulemaking cycle; or
 - b) Plans that are identical to a plan that was preapproved pursuant to 1), as long as they were approved by the local agency within the current CBSC rulemaking cycle.
- 3) Provides that the preapproval program shall not apply to single-family or multifamily residential housing plans intended for use in master-planned communities or large scale developments, as specified.

Background

The California Building Standards Code. Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations contains building standards and regulations as adopted by the CBSC. These standards include, among other requirements, structural standards for building safety (the Building Code), fire safety standards (the Fire Code), energy efficiency standards (the Energy Code), and standards for green buildings (CalGreen). The BSC updates the Building Standards Code on a three-year cycle—the current standards that went into effect on January 1, 2023. Once adopted at the state level, cities and counties in California then each enact an ordinance to adopt the codes. New construction and improvements to existing buildings must comply with the current building codes, and improvements to an existing building may trigger additional code upgrades for other parts of a building.

Comments

- 1) *Author's Statement.* According to the author, “Home is more than just walls and a roof—it is the foundation of stability, security, and opportunity. Yet, for too many families, particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color, the dream of safe and affordable housing remains out of reach. The devastation of the Los Angeles wildfires only deepened these

inequities, displacing thousands and further straining an already dire housing crisis. AB 1206 streamlines the approval process for single-family and multifamily housing by requiring local agencies to establish pre-approved housing plan programs by July 1, 2026. By doing so, homeowners will have access to a set list of housing models they can choose from to quickly and efficiently rebuild. This bill provides a standardized path for housing development, cutting through red tape so that rebuilding efforts and new construction can move forward without costly and burdensome delays. By making the rebuilding process more accessible and efficient, AB 1206 ensures that communities can recover faster and that families can once again find stability in a place to call home.”

- 2) *California’s housing crisis.* According to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), California’s housing crisis is a half-century in the making.¹ After decades of underproduction, supply is far behind need and housing, and rental costs are soaring. As a result, millions of Californians must make hard decisions about paying for housing at the expense of food, health care, child care, and transportation, directly impacting the quality of life in the state. One in three households in the state doesn’t earn enough money to meet their basic needs. In 2024, over 187,000 Californians experienced homelessness on a given night.²

To meet this housing need, HCD determined that California must plan for more than 2.5 million new homes, and no less than one million of those homes must be affordable to lower-income households, in the 6th Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Cycle. By contrast, housing production in the past decade has been under 100,000 units per year – including less than 10,000 units of affordable housing per year.³

- 3) *Preapproved Plans.* In an attempt to increase standardization and predictability in housing approvals, there has been increased interest at the state and local level in preapproved plans for housing development.

Building on the success of prior ADU laws, AB 1332 (Juan Carrillo), Chapter 759, Statutes of 2023, established a preapproved plan program for ADUs from which this bill draws heavily. Under AB 1332, local governments were required to develop a program for the preapproval of ADU plans by January 1,

¹ California Department of Housing and Community Development, *A Home for Every Californian: 2022 Statewide Housing Plan*. March 2022, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/94729ab1648d43b1811c1698a748c136>

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Point in Time Counts.

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2023-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

³ <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/housing-challenges.shtml>

2025. Under this program, anyone can submit plans for preapproval, and the local government must review them based on existing state ADU and building code standards. The local agency is allowed to charge the same permitting fees as they would for a regular ADU application to review submittals for ADUs requesting preapproval. Once approved, these plans must be posted on the local government's website, along with the applicant's contact information (though the agency isn't responsible for its accuracy). Applicants can also request their ADU plans be removed if they no longer wish to participate in the program. Local governments are also allowed to include their own preapproved ADU plans or ones approved by other local governments in California in the preapproved plan program, since the same ADU standards apply statewide. If a local government receives an application for a detached ADU using a preapproved or previously approved plan from the current building code cycle, the local government must approve or deny the permit application within 30 days, without discretionary review. Because this program just went into effect on January 1, 2025, it is still too early to tell how successful or impactful it will be in terms of increasing ADU production.

- 4) *Experiments in preapproval.* More recently, the City of Los Angeles (LA) launched a local "Small Lots, Big Impact" initiative to encourage for-sale housing on small lots.⁴ Through this initiative, LA is hosting a design competition for designers to develop plans for multiple small-scale housing units on individual lots, with the winning designs eventually serving as pre-approved plans for all developers to use.⁵ The LA housing department anticipates that these pre-approved designs will be for one- to three-story developments ranging from fourplexes to 20 unit proposals.⁶ LA anticipates that this program may help the Pacific Palisades neighborhood rebuild more quickly after thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed in January's Palisades fire.

This bill would build off of the precedent set by AB 1332 (Juan Carrillo) and would be similar to LA's preapproved plan initiative. It would take the language from AB 1332, establishing a local program for the preapproval of housing, but apply it to single-family and multi-family homes, rather than just ADUs. Under this bill, local governments would be required to set up a program for the preapproval of single-family and multi-family homes, and then expedite the approvals process for applicants who later want to use those preapproved designs, by requiring local governments to review them within 30

⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-05/los-angeles-launches-effort-to-encourage-starter-homes-on-city-owned-vacant-lots>

⁵ IBID.

⁶ IBID.

days. As written, local governments would need to set up this program by January 1, 2026. As is the case in AB 1332, local governments would be allowed to charge the same permitting fees as they would for the standard approval of similar housing units to review these plans submitted for preapproval. Project applicants may then use these preapproved plans, or plans identical to them, when applying for housing developments of their own. This preapproved program may help to standardize and simplify the approvals process for homeowners and developers by increasing approvals certainty so long as they stick to the preapproved plans, and by expediting the approvals process.

- 5) *Monitoring progress.* This bill requires each local agency to develop a program for the preapproval of single-family and small multifamily (2-10 residential units) dwellings. This bill requires local agencies to accept applications for preapproval and authorizes local agencies to charge permitting fees that would be applicable to the project if it were a regular development application. While the bill establishes broad parameters for preapproval, it does not strictly define the contours of what a preapproval program must look like. This provides local agencies some latitude to design a program that will be effective and appropriate in their area. However, given the latitude provided to local agencies, the Committee may wish to consider adding a reporting requirement in order to monitor implementation of the bill.
- 6) *Large and small jurisdictions.* This bill requires each local agency in the state to develop a program for preapproval of single-family and small multifamily dwellings. The resources available to LA along with the housing demand in LA is not comparable to the resources and demand in Modoc County. Establishing uniform requirements could place tremendous burdens on rural agencies that see relatively few housing permits each year. The Committee may wish to consider whether this bill should apply to equally to large and small jurisdictions.
- 7) *Opposition.* The League of California Cities is in opposition along with several other local agencies. The League notes that the bill only provides six months for local agencies to prepare a program and urges the author to consider giving local agencies more time to implement the preapproval program.
- 8) *Committee amendments.* **To address the items raised above, the author has agreed to accept the following amendments:**

- a. Require local agencies to include information regarding the number of developments that use preapproved applications in the annual progress report (APR) beginning in 2027.**
- b. Delay implementation of the bill until 2028 in small counties, defined as counties with a total population of less than 250,000. These counties comprise roughly 2.5 million residents, or less than 7% of California's total population.**

9) *Double Referral.* This bill was also referred to the Local Government Committee, where it was approved on a 5-2 vote on June 18, 2025.

Related/Prior Legislation

AB 1332 (Juan Carrillo, Chapter 759, Statutes of 2023) - established a similar preapproved plan program for ADUs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, July 9, 2025.)

SUPPORT:

Abundant Housing LA
Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
California Apartment Association
California Yimby
Circulate San Diego
Habitat for Humanity California
Inner City Law Center
Institute for Responsive Government Action
South Pasadena Residents for Responsible Growth
Spur
Student Homes Coalition
The Two Hundred
Zillow Group

OPPOSITION:

Association of California Cities - Orange County (ACC-OC)
California Building Officials
City of Laguna Niguel

City of Lake Forest
City of Los Alamitos
City of Santa Clarita
City of Thousand Oaks
League of California Cities

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