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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Senator María Elena Durazo, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1997  
**Author:** Lee  
**Version:** 5/18/26

**Hearing Date:** 6/17/26  
**Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Favorini-Csorba

## ***LAND USE: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS: TIMELINES AND PROCESSES***

*Expedites the timeline for approval or disapproval of certain affordable housing development projects.*

### **Background**

The California Constitution allows cities and counties to “make and enforce within its limits, all local, police, sanitary and other ordinances and regulations not in conflict with general laws.” It is from this fundamental power (commonly called the police power) that cities and counties derive their authority to regulate behavior to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the public—including land use authority.

***Zoning and approval processes.*** Local governments use their police power to enact zoning ordinances that establish the types of land uses that are allowed or authorized in an area. Zoning ordinances often identify a primary use for parcels in the area, as well as other uses that are allowed if they meet conditions imposed by the local government. They also set the standards and conditions that development must comply with in order to proceed.

Local governments have broad authority to define the specific approval processes needed to satisfy these considerations. Some housing projects can be permitted by city or county planning staff “ministerially” or without further approval from elected officials, but most large housing projects require “discretionary” approvals from local governments, such as a conditional use permit or a change in zoning laws. This process requires hearings by the local planning commission and public notice and may require additional approvals.

***Permit Streamlining Act.*** The 1977 Permit Streamlining Act (PSA) requires public agencies to act fairly and promptly on applications for development permits, including housing. Public agencies must compile detailed lists of information that applicants for development projects must provide and explain the criteria they will use to review permit applications. Public agencies have 30 days to determine whether applications for development projects are complete; failure to act results in an application being “deemed complete.”

Once a complete application for a development has been submitted, the PSA requires public officials to act within a specific time period after completing any environmental review documents required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), ranging from 30 to 180 days depending on the project and the environmental review required. Specifically, “lead agencies,” which are public agencies that have principal responsibility for approving a project, must approve or deny the project within:

- 180 days of certifying an environmental impact report (EIR);
- 90 days of certifying an EIR for a housing project;
- 60 days of certifying an EIR for a housing project that is at least 49% affordable to very low or low-income households and the project has applied or will apply for state or federal financial assistance;
- 60 days of adopting a negative declaration under CEQA, determining a project is exempt from CEQA, or receiving a complete application if the project is subject to ministerial review; and
- 60 to 90 days, depending on project size, of receiving a complete application for a housing project that qualifies for a CEQA exemption pursuant to AB 130 (Committee on Budget, 2025), unless specified tribal consultation is ongoing.

If the public agency fails to approve or disapprove the application in the applicable time period, the application is “deemed approved,” and the applicant may file suit in state court to order the local government to issue the permit.

The PSA also requires a “responsible agency,” which is any other public agency with discretionary approval over part of the project, to approve or deny a project within specified timeframes following approval by the lead agency. AB 1007 (Rubio, 2025) shortened the review period for responsible agencies to review a housing project to:

- Within 45 days of receiving a complete application, or the lead agency approving the project, whichever is longer; and
- When the responsible agency is the Coastal Commission or San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, within 90 days of receiving a complete application, or the lead agency approving the project, whichever is longer. This 90-day clock also applies to specified permits issued by the State Water Resources Control Board.

It can take years for a housing project to receive the necessary land use approvals to move to the construction phase. For example, the table below indicates the average number of days for housing projects to go from a submitted application to entitled in 2024, based on data reported by local governments to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

<b>Development Type</b>	Single Family (Detached)	Single Family (Attached)	Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)	Mobile Home	Two to Four Units	Five or More Units
<b>Average time from submission to entitled (days)</b>	112	200	103	104	187	250

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation wants the Legislature to shorten housing development approval times.

**Proposed Law**

Assembly Bill 1997 requires a lead agency under the PSA to approve a housing project within 30 days of the certification of an EIR for housing project that is at least 90% affordable to very low or low-income households and the project has applied or will apply for state or federal financial assistance, as specified. The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

**Comments**

1. Purpose of the bill. According to the author, “AB 1997 reduces from 60 days down to 30 days the period of time a lead agency has to approve or deny an affordable housing project’s environmental impact report (EIR) after the lead agency certifies the EIR. This faster timeline only applies to projects that are 90% affordable to very-low or extremely-low income households, and requires the project applicant to have provided written notice to the agency specifics about the project’s financing. This narrow and very focused streamlining will move 90% affordable housing projects faster.”

2. Don’t look at me, I just work here. In recent years, as the Legislature has enacted housing streamlining laws, it has also added special provisions relating to housing to the deadlines in the PSA. As these provisions have proliferated, they have used inconsistent terms, including “development project” and “housing development project.” However, the term development project is already a defined term in the PSA, creating confusion over which requirements apply to what projects. AB 1997 adds an additional category of housing development projects. But because of the way the PSA is drafted, projects streamlined by AB 1997 would not benefit from the same shortened timeframes for approval of the project by a *responsible agency*. The Committee may wish to consider amending AB 1997 to clarify which deadlines in the PSA apply to all development projects versus only housing development projects.

3. Mandate. The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local governments for the costs of new or expanded state mandated local programs. Because AB 1997 imposes new duties on local officials, Legislative Counsel says that it imposes a new state mandate. AB 1997 disclaims the state’s responsibility for providing reimbursement by citing local governments’ authority to charge for the costs of implementing the bill’s provisions.

4. Coming and going. The Senate Rules Committee has ordered a double referral: first to the Committee on Local Government to hear issues related to the Permit Streamlining Act, and second to the Committee on Housing.

**Assembly Actions**

Assembly Local Government Committee:	8-0
Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee:	11-1
Assembly Appropriations Committee:	11-1
Assembly Floor:	71-3

**Support and Opposition** (6/12/2026)

Support: Aids Healthcare Foundation  
Opposition: City of LA Verne