
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
Senator Jesse Arreguín, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 908 **Hearing Date:** 4/21/2026
Author: Wiener
Version: 4/8/2026 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Ryan Hardmeyer

SUBJECT: Residential windows: retrofitting: California Energy Code compliance

DIGEST: This bill prohibits homeowner’s associations (HOAs) and local governments from limiting or prohibiting a homeowner from replacing existing windows with energy code compliant windows, and prevents local governments from imposing conditions on proposed windows in a residential development project beyond objective conditions.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC), which is responsible for promulgating statewide building standards.
- 2) Establishes the California Energy Commission (CEC), which helps CBSC develop energy efficiency standards for buildings, including those for windows.
- 3) Requires local governments to enforce the building standards promulgated by CBSC when approving and reviewing local projects.
- 4) Exempts historic districts and historical landmarks registered on the State Historic Resources Inventory from certain housing policies.

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits HOA governing documents from limiting or prohibiting the owner of a separate interest within the common interest development (CID) from replacing existing windows with energy code compliant windows.

- 2) Requires a city, county, or city and county to administratively approve a residential window replacement application to replace existing residential windows with energy code compliant windows.
- 3) Prohibits a city, county, or city and county from requiring discretionary review or a hearing for a residential window replacement project that is limited to replacing existing windows with energy code compliant windows and does not involve any physical alterations to the existing structure beyond those necessary to install those windows.
- 4) Prohibits a city, county, or city and county from denying an application for a permit to replace existing windows with energy code compliant windows unless it makes written findings, based upon substantial evidence in the record, that the proposed replacement would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health or safety and there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact. Requires any conditions imposed on a residential window replacement shall be limited to objective conditions that are necessary to mitigate a specific, adverse impact upon public health or safety.
- 5) Prohibits a city, county, or city and county from imposing conditions on proposed windows in residential development projects beyond those objective conditions that are necessary to mitigate a specific adverse impact upon public health or safety, unless it makes written findings, based upon substantial evidence in the record, that the proposed CEC-compliant window would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health or safety.
- 6) Provides that the restrictions in the bill do not apply to either of the following:
 - a) A residential structure that is individually listed as a historical resource in the State Historic Resources Inventory, provided that the parcel or structure was designated prior to the date an application to replace existing residential windows with CEC-compliant windows is submitted.
 - b) A residential structure individually designated or listed as a city or county landmark under a city or county ordinance. A local ordinance that designates multiple properties as historic based solely on the age of the structure, or an ordinance that designates a district or neighborhood as historic, does not constitute an ordinance that individually identifies a structure as a city or county landmark.

Background

Building standards. The California Building Standards Law establishes the process for adopting state building standards by CBSC. Statewide building standards are intended to provide uniformity in building across the state. CBSC's duties include the following: receiving proposed building standards from state agencies for consideration in each triennial and intervening building code adoption cycle; reviewing and approving building standards submitted by state agencies; adopting building standards for state buildings where no other state agency is authorized by law; and publishing the approved building standards in the California Building Standards Code.

There are approximately 20 state agencies that develop building standards and propose them for adoption to CBSC. After the proposal of building standards by state agencies, the standards undergo a public vetting process. A code advisory committee composed of experts in a particular scope of code reviews the proposed standards, followed by public review. The proposing agency considers feedback and may then amend the standards and re-submit them to CBSC for consideration. The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is responsible for the standards for residential buildings, hotels, and motels. The California Building Code and California Residential Code govern general standards for multifamily and single-family residential construction.

Updates and changes to building standards are typically adopted on two timelines: through the triennial code adoption cycle which occurs every three years, and through the intervening code adoption cycle which provides an update to codes 18 months after the publication of the triennial codes. However, action taken in the Budget Act of 2025 prohibits CBSC and any other adopting agency, from October 1, 2025, until June 1, 2031, from considering, approving, or adopting any proposed building standards affecting residential units unless the standards are related to emergency standards, home hardening, single stairway, certain water use standards, or standards necessary to align with federal standards and model codes.

Comments

- 1) *Author's Statement.* "Energy costs are too high, and people should be able to weatherize their windows to lower their monthly energy bills. When cities or HOAs block people from replacing their windows due to aesthetic concerns, it means higher bills for people and worsening climate change. Unfortunately, various cities and HOAs are currently doing just that — blocking people from weatherizing their windows. SB 908 ensures people can install energy-efficient windows, while exempting truly historic homes."

- 2) *Energy code compliant windows.* According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heat gain and heat loss through windows account for 25-30% of residential heating and cooling energy use.¹ Over time, California has adopted higher standards for residential windows to promote greater energy efficiency. Under Title 24 of the California Energy Code, windows in all new construction homes must meet certain standards to improve energy efficiency. Title 24 includes two metrics to measure such efficiency: U-factor and Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC). The U-factor refers to how well a window keeps heat *in* a building, while the SHGC refers to how much heat a window keeps *out*. When windows meet these standards, homeowners often see lower monthly energy costs and benefit from a more climate-controlled environment.

- 3) *What's permitted.* State law requires local governments to enforce the regulations established by the Building Standards Code and Energy Code, including those described in Comment 2). Beyond those baseline requirements, existing law permits HOAs and local governments to enforce more stringent requirements on residential window replacements and installations. Some HOAs and local governments assume this power by requiring a homeowner to apply for a permit to replace an existing window and meet specific requirements, which are often concerned with aesthetics. For example, in San Francisco, a building permit is required for all types of window replacement (regardless of the location on a building), including enlarging existing windows or adding new window openings. According to the San Francisco Planning Department, “Windows are an integral part of the design and character of most buildings, and choosing appropriate replacement windows is frequently a critical aspect of any rehabilitation project. Windows have a variety of different window shapes, muntin profiles, methods of operation and configurations; therefore, minor changes may alter the appearance of a building.”²

- 4) *A window into what's going on.* Despite the value of energy code compliant windows for lowering energy bills, reducing emissions, and promoting interior climate control, homeowners in both HOAs and stricter local jurisdictions (e.g., San Francisco) have reported arduous approval processes to replace their existing windows. By instituting burdensome requirements, homeowners are then forced to choose between keeping their inefficient existing windows or

¹ U.S. Department of Energy. *Update or Replace Windows*. Accessible here: <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/update-or-replace-windows#:~:text=Heat%20gain%20and%20heat%20loss%20through%20windows%20are%20responsible%20for%2025%25%E2%80%9330%25%20of%20residential%20heating%20and%20cooling%20energy%20use.%C2%A0>

² San Francisco Planning Department. *Standards & Recommendations – Window Replacement*. Accessible here: https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Window_Replacement_Standards_Recommendations.pdf. May 2025.

paying for significantly more expensive replica windows. This bill would put limits on HOAs and local governments to reduce the burdensome process for homeowners to upgrade their existing windows. It also recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach may not work in all communities, and includes exemptions for housing units registered as landmarks or historical resources, while also preventing local governments from abusing these historical designations solely for the purpose of preventing the installation of CEC-compliant windows that do not meet their desired aesthetic.

- 5) *New developments.* Author amendments made on April 8th expand the scope of this bill to also prohibit local governments from “impos[ing] any conditions on California Energy Code-compliant windows” proposed in residential development projects, beyond those objective conditions that are necessary to mitigate a specific adverse impact upon public health or safety. Those amendments also require the local government to make written findings, based upon substantial evidence in the record, that the proposed CEC-compliant window would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health or safety.
- 6) *Senate Local Government Committee Amendments.* The author agreed to committee amendments in Senate Local Government on 4/15/2026. **Due to timing, the committee may wish to consider approving the amendments approved by the Senate Local Government Committee:**
 - a) **Define “residential window replacement project” to mean only a project that replaces a window with a new window of the same size, opening type, and location, and use the term consistently throughout the bill.**
 - b) **Require compliance with all applicable state codes for new or replacement windows. Currently, this bill only requires windows to comply with the CEC standards, which could be interpreted to exclude other codes such as the California Fire Code, the California Residential Code, or the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code.**
 - c) **Narrow restriction on a local government imposing conditions on windows proposed in a residential development project, that meet certain requirements, to any City and County in California.**

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 655 (Stern, Chapter 522, Statutes of 2025) — required all dwelling units to be able to attain and maintain a safe maximum indoor temperature.

AB 806 (Connolly, Chapter 343, Statutes of 2025) — prohibited mobilehome park management from preventing or restricting a mobilehome owner from installing, upgrading, replacing, or using a cooling system in their mobilehome.

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

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, April 15th, 2026.)

SUPPORT:

Association for Energy Affordability
Association for Energy Affordability, INC.
Building Decarbonization Coalition Action Fund
California Apartment Association
California Yimby
Housing Action Coalition
Nrdc
Sierra Club California

OPPOSITION:

None Received.

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