

April 8, 2019

The Honorable Richard Bloom
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Support – AB 881 – Accessory dwelling units.

Assembly Member Bloom,

I write on behalf of California YIMBY to support and sponsor AB 881, which, among other provisions, will delete the provision authorizing a local agency to require owner-occupancy as a condition of issuing a permit for an Accessory Dwelling Unit, making these important housing options easier to build.

California YIMBY is a statewide organization of 60,000 neighbors who welcome more neighbors. We believe that an equitable California begins with abundant, secure, affordable housing. We focus on housing and land use policy at the state and local level to ensure grassroots organizers and city leaders have the tools they need to accelerate home building, fight displacement, and fight for a California for everyone.

According to independent researchers at McKinsey, California needs 3.5 million new homes to catch up with our shortfall and meet our growing state's needs by 2025 (Woetzel). California is not on track to meet this goal, meaning California is likely to get even more expensive. ADUs provide a quick and easy option for increasing the amount of housing in California, and AB 881 will help build them.

ADUs, also referred to as secondary units, casitas, in-law suites, or granny flats, are smaller, independent units on the same lot as a single or multi family home. Research from UC Berkeley shows that ADUs cost less to both build and rent, making them an affordable and ecofriendly source of new housing (Garcia).

ADUs utilize existing space on lots and maximize land use to minimize impacts on growing communities. The smaller size of ADUs allows them to be built faster and be on the market sooner. Residents will have greater choice in where they want to live as ADUs present more affordable options in neighborhoods. They also allow families to build multi-generational housing, dignifying the aging process and making life a little easier for young parents who can get child raising help from their parents.

AB 881 improves on the existing laws by making them harder to circumvent. Specifically, the bill:

- Eliminates the statute's owner-occupancy requirement
- Clarifies that garages are structures that can be converted into ADUs
- Clarifies that distance to public transit refers to "traversable", or walking, distance
- Defines "existing structure" to mean a structure constructed before conversion
- Limits additional criteria that can be used to exclude ADUs

Eliminating the owner occupancy requirement is of particular importance. This provision, intentionally or not, allows local governments to prevent the construction of ADUs, because homeowners are often unsure of what their requirements will be if they wish to move, and banks are reluctant to lend if the deed is restricted to owner occupancy. By making it easier to lend to homeowners, AB 881 will likely increase the number of ADUs built.

Recent state efforts to incentivize the construction of ADUs have resulted in more communities and families building ADUs. With further legislation, ADUs can become a reliable, cost-efficient way to address the affordable housing crisis, if they are not a major part of the solution already.

By providing cost-effective guidelines and removing own-occupancy requirements, AB 881 will help combat California's housing shortage. This legislation will help add thousands of new units to California's housing stock. For these reasons and more, California YIMBY is proud to sponsor AB 881.

Thank you.



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Sources:

1. Woetzel, Jonathan, et al. "Closing California's Housing Gap." McKinsey & Company, McKinsey Global Institute, Oct. 2016, www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/urbanization/closing-californias-housing-gap.
2. Garcia, David. ADU Update: Early Lessons and Impacts of California's State and Local Policy Changes. UC Berkeley Turner Center for Housing Innovation, Dec. 2017, turnercenter.berkeley.edu/uploads/ADU_Update_Brief_December_2017_.pdf.