



# Building an Affordable California Act: Frequently Asked Questions

## What does this measure do?

The Building an Affordable California Act modernizes the state's outdated approval process to deliver essential projects faster and more affordably—while maintaining California's strong environmental laws and protections. The Act creates enforceable timelines, streamlines approvals, and limits frivolous lawsuits to reduce the cost of homes, healthcare, and electricity while jumpstarting projects that create good-paying jobs and put more Californians to work.

## Why is the measure needed?

California is failing to deliver the basics because essential projects take too long to approve. Agency reviews can drag on for years, while frivolous lawsuits add even more delays and uncertainty. Delays drive up costs before construction even begins, and those costs are passed on to renters, homebuyers, people paying electricity and water bills, and taxpayers. Delays also mean higher wildfire risk, higher electricity costs, more traffic congestion, overcrowded schools and aging hospitals. We need to reform this outdated system to reduce costs and build the essential projects California needs.

## How will Affordable CA help bring down the cost of living?

Lengthy delays force Californians to wait longer and pay more for needed housing, energy, water, and other essential infrastructure. Every month a project is delayed, costs go up—from financing and legal fees to materials and labor. For example, permitting delays add more than \$75,000 to the cost of a new home and billions to the cost of hospitals, water systems, roads, bridges, and clean energy projects—costs that ultimately fall on consumers and taxpayers. By setting enforceable timelines, streamlining approvals, and limiting frivolous lawsuits—while maintaining California's strong environmental and worker protections—Affordable CA helps cut red tape, build faster, reduce costs, and make life more affordable for everyone.

## What kinds of projects does this measure apply to?

The Act applies only to essential projects that lower costs, protect the environment, and improve quality of life. That includes:

- **Housing:** Single-family homes, apartments, senior and student housing, transitional and supportive housing, farmworker housing, and conversions of existing commercial buildings to residential use.
- **Public Health:** Projects that build or modernize health care facilities including hospitals, clinics, and medical office buildings.
- **Water:** Projects that deliver clean drinking water and improve California’s water systems—dams, pipelines, recycling plants, stormwater capture, and other infrastructure identified in the State’s Water Resilience Portfolio.
- **Clean Energy:** Projects that support California’s clean energy, reliability, and climate goals—including solar, wind, geothermal, small hydro, clean hydrogen, battery storage, fuel cells, clean carbon capture, upgrades to the electric grid, transmission, and distribution systems—plus EV charging and electrification projects.
- **Education Facilities:** Projects that build or modernize educational facilities, including K–12 schools, charter schools, community colleges, CSU/UC campuses, private colleges and universities, labs, and other student support facilities.
- **Public Safety & Wildfire Resilience:** Building or upgrading fire and police stations, vegetation management, fuel reduction, moving utility lines underground, home hardening, and creating or maintaining fuel breaks.
- **Transportation:** Projects that improve traffic flow, safety, or access to public transit including roads, bridges, sidewalks, and transit upgrades as well as EV charging infrastructure.
- **Broadband & Digital Communication:** Projects that expand high-speed internet access including fiber-optic and wireless broadband infrastructure to connect underserved and rural communities.

## Does this measure weaken environmental laws?

No. The Act keeps all of California’s strongest environmental protections fully in place. It does not weaken or exempt any project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, California Coastal Act, Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, or California’s Global Warming Solutions Act. Projects must still complete full CEQA review and meet every applicable environmental standard. The Act simply modernizes the process—setting clear timelines, preventing frivolous lawsuits, and ensuring reviews are faster, more transparent, and focused on results. That means California can build the clean energy, housing, and infrastructure projects we need—without sacrificing our air, water, or natural resources.

## **Does this measure reduce local control or public input?**

No. Local governments keep full authority to approve or deny projects in their communities. The Act simply ensures those decisions are made within one year—not after years of delay. It also protects public participation, requiring a 45-day public comment period and written responses to all timely comments. This ensures that local voices remain part of the process while preventing bureaucratic gridlock that drives up costs. Communities will continue to shape how projects fit their neighborhoods—but with a process that’s faster, fairer, and more accountable.

## **How does Affordable CA strengthen tribal consultation rights?**

Affordable CA protects and strengthens tribal consultation by requiring early engagement with California Indian tribes before project applications are submitted, incorporating Tribal Traditional Knowledge, and enhancing confidentiality protections—all while fully respecting tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government consultation process.

## **What worker protections are included in the Act?**

Every essential project must meet California’s strongest labor standards—including fair pay, safe working conditions, and skilled-and-trained workforce requirements. Essential housing projects must meet AB 130 labor standards, and all other essential projects must comply with ELDP-level labor requirements.

## **Does Affordable CA eliminate the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?**

No. CEQA remains fully operational under the Act. The Act simply streamlines how CEQA is applied to essential projects, setting clear timelines, enforceable rules to provide predictability and accountability, and establishing a faster, evidence-based process for litigation. Affordable CA ensures CEQA works as it was intended—to protect the environment, not to block progress on essential projects.

## **Who decides if a project qualifies under Affordable CA?**

The same local and state agencies that approve projects today. Cities, counties, regional boards, and state departments still review, approve, or deny projects under existing environmental and land-use laws.

## **How does Affordable CA help the environment?**

The Act accelerates the very projects that will help California protect the environment and fight climate change. By cutting red tape for clean energy, water, and wildfire prevention, it reduces pollution, protects water supplies, and lowers carbon emissions. It helps California build a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable future—faster.

## Could this measure lead to unchecked development?

No. The Act applies only to essential projects and keeps in place every existing protection for California's most sensitive and protected lands. Projects must still comply with the Coastal Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, and laws protecting wetlands, wildlife habitat, and environmentally sensitive areas. Every project must also meet local zoning, land-use, and public review requirements. The Act simply ensures those reviews happen on a clear, predictable schedule—delivering accountability and transparency, not exemptions or shortcuts—so California can build responsibly and affordably.

## How is this measure different from other recent reforms?

Recent legislation has granted narrow exemptions for a short list of projects—allowing them to bypass environmental review entirely. The Act does not exempt any project from environmental review and instead delivers comprehensive reform of the state's permitting and approval process while keeping every environmental protection fully intact. It simply establishes clear, consistent standards and reasonable timelines to make the process faster, fairer, and more predictable for everyone.

## Why is this on the ballot?

For decades, efforts to modernize California's outdated permitting system have stalled—leaving families to pay the price. Instead of comprehensive reform, state leaders have relied on narrow fixes for a few select projects while costs continue to skyrocket for housing, healthcare, electricity and other everyday needs. The Act gives voters the opportunity to take a truly comprehensive approach—streamlining approvals for essential projects Californians need while maintaining California's strong environmental and labor protections.



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