



City of Santa Barbara

Office of the Mayor

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May 27, 2025

Randy Rowse
Mayor

The Honorable Diane Papan
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 4710
Sacramento, CA 95814

City Hall
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Santa Barbara, CA
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**RE: AB 650 (Papan) – Planning and Zoning: Housing Element and Regional Housing Needs Allocation
City of Santa Barbara – Notice of Support**

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Dear Assembly Member Papan:

On behalf of the City of Santa Barbara, I write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 650, which proposes pragmatic and meaningful reforms to California's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and housing element certification processes. We appreciate your leadership in authoring this timely legislation and your commitment to improving the clarity, transparency, and workability of state housing law.

Like many jurisdictions across California, the City of Santa Barbara has devoted extensive resources, technical analysis, and community engagement toward the development of a certified housing element aligned with both regional RHNA obligations and the State's housing goals. The sixth RHNA cycle has illustrated the significant challenges cities face—particularly in managing overlapping deadlines, evolving compliance expectations, and limited clarity in communications from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

AB 650 makes two key improvements that would address these challenges and enhance housing policy implementation statewide:

1. *Realigning and Clarifying Timelines*

By extending key statutory deadlines by approximately six months, AB 650 enables better sequencing between HCD reviews, Council of Government (COG) methodologies, and local housing element adoption and rezoning. This added flexibility will improve alignment between RHNA requirements and local planning processes, reducing the risk of procedural non-compliance while still upholding the rigor of state housing law.

2. *Enhancing HCD Feedback and Accountability*

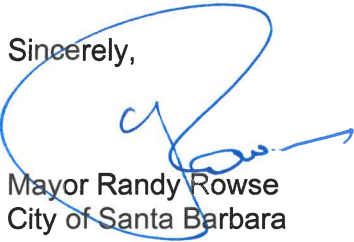
The bill requires HCD to provide specific, actionable feedback tied to local housing element text or analysis. This clear guidance would help jurisdictions respond more effectively to HCD's findings, eliminate ambiguity, and support collaborative problem-solving. It also reinforces transparency and consistency in HCD's review process, allowing local governments to plan with greater confidence.

Importantly, these proposed changes do not weaken housing element standards or the State's oversight authority. Rather, AB 650 reinforces the integrity of the process by promoting predictability, transparency, and fairness—especially important as cities prepare for the seventh RHNA cycle, which is expected to include additional planning mandates and new metrics tied to fair housing and zoning reform.

The City of Santa Barbara supports AB 650 as a thoughtful, technical reform that will strengthen the effectiveness of state housing policies and improve implementation at the local level.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Mayor Randy Rowse
City of Santa Barbara

Cc: Assemblymember Gregg Hart
Senator Monique Limón