

If this state bill passes, multistory apartments could be forced on your neighborhood

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Anyone following California politics knows there is an insatiable appetite for politicians in Sacramento to exert more and more control over our lives. This year is no exception, as an effort has emerged that would severely curtail local governments' control. If enacted, it will set a troubling precedent about the state's role in overriding local land use decisions.

This power grab comes in the form of [Senate Bill 827](#), authored by Bay Area legislator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco). It promotes the latest panacea for California's housing crisis being pushed by coastal progressives: apartment towers near public transit stops. The bill would automatically approve huge multi-family housing projects within a half-mile of train station and quarter mile of stops with frequent bus service.

The projects could be as tall as five stories. Local governments could be barred from imposing reasonable conditions. Most importantly, it makes no accommodation for rural and suburban communities where this type of housing makes little sense, yet local governments would be barred from doing anything to stop it. As currently written, any Amtrak station in San Luis Obispo County would be eligible.

The theory goes that this type of housing will convince people to abandon their cars in favor of public transit as part of California's crusade to single-handedly stop global warming. Proponents say this will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while building up cities to be less reliant on automobiles. The problem is that in the real world, most Californians are not ready to give up their cars and public transportation isn't nearly developed enough for this transition. Thinking that government can socially engineer a new era of urban

development through housing policies that favor apartments and condos is just the latest hubris displayed by California progressives.

There is no doubt that the housing crisis is real as the state's [median home price is now \\$524,000](#). According to [California Budget & Policy Center](#), nearly 30 percent of renters in the state spend over half of their monthly income on rent. When housing costs are considered, [California is the poorest state in the country](#).

Instead of a real solution to fix this problem, we get bills like SB 827, which will damage local control and do nothing to address the housing crisis. In fact, while there would be some requirements for affordable units, it's likely that much of the housing envisioned by the bill would be luxury housing, which overwhelmingly makes up the current supply of apartment and condo towers. It would be far out of the price range of ordinary people. The path for making housing affordable again for working and middle class families doesn't lie in bills like SB 827, it requires real reforms.

A good place to start would be to reform the state's environmental laws that lead to expensive lawsuits that often have little to do with legitimate environmental concerns, all while creating uncertainty for developers and reducing their willingness to pursue housing projects. State laws that inflate building prices by mandating what type of materials builders use and preferences for union labor that drive up costs on government-financed affordable housing projects should also be examined. Clearly there are many things that the Legislature and Gov. Brown need to address before they start pointing the finger at local governments and strip them of one of their most fundamental powers.

If this bill is successful, it will only be the start of a long campaign to meticulously strip local governments of housing and land-use policies. California already has seen this steady erosion of local control in other areas as we have seen the state chipping away at local school board autonomy for decades. Once Sacramento has the power, it doesn't ever give it back.

A one-size solution for California's housing crisis is not realistic. These are decisions that must be made locally and not micromanaged in Sacramento.

SB 827 is the latest example of how liberals think they can shape society in their image of fighting global warming and urbanizing our communities. In reality, the bill will set a terrible precedent for local control and will only increase the supply of luxury apartments that young urban professionals prefer. That doesn't sound like much of a solution for the housing crisis that is squeezing millions of Californians.

An Update on the Split Roll Property Tax Initiative

Bad news for [Hugh M. Gilson](#) of Oceano who in his April 8 letter to the editor supported The Split Roll Property Tax Initiative, which would make a dramatic change to California's Proposition 13. The ambitious effort to raise commercial property taxes through "revamping" Proposition 13 will no longer be aimed at earning a spot on the [statewide ballot this November](#). That's good news for the forgotten taxpayers, including many small business owners in San Luis Obispo County. We can never let up on our fight to protect Proposition 13. The battle to take it down will continue by the progressive socialists whose mantra is to tax, tax, tax!