

# Senate Bill 4 – “Affordable Housing on Faith Lands”

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ❖ **What is SB 4?**

SB 4 is a bill signed into California law in October 2023. It allows faith institutions to build affordable housing on their land, even if local zoning now prevents it.

### ❖ **Why was SB 4 needed?**

California has a housing crisis. One of the barriers to creating affordable housing is the lack of available land. Many faith institutions have underutilized land or buildings that could be used for housing, but they have faced barriers from local zoning and approval processes that made it difficult or impossible to build affordable housing on their land.

### ❖ **How does a congregation benefit from building affordable housing under SB 4?**

- ❑ By partnering with a nonprofit affordable housing developer, the planning and construction costs are managed by the developer. Nonprofit affordable housing developers may also manage the housing once completed.
- ❑ Congregations may retain ownership of their land and can gain income from the development by, for example, holding a lease with the developer.
- ❑ Depending on the number of housing units created, the congregation can house one or more of its staff members.
- ❑ Last but certainly not least, the faith institutions are enabled to fulfill their missions of serving their communities.

### ❖ **How does SB 4 work?**

The religious institution, usually in collaboration with a nonprofit affordable housing developer, submits an application to the city/local government for streamlined approval of the proposed development. The development must satisfy specified criteria, but it does not need a conditional use permit or other discretionary approval from the local government. This greatly reduces the development time.

### ❖ **What are the additional uses allowed for a housing development project under SB 4?**

- ❑ Nonresidential uses such as community rooms, laundry facilities, storage areas, bicycle parking, common open space, etc.
- ❑ Nonresidential uses that serve the needs of the residents or surrounding community, such as child care facilities, health clinics, social services offices, educational facilities, religious facilities, and cultural facilities.
- ❑ Nonresidential uses on the ground floor that do not exceed 25% of the total floor area of the development, such as retail, restaurant, office, or other commercial uses.

❖ **What are the criteria for a housing development project to be eligible for SB 4?**

- The project must be located on land owned by religious institution on or before January 1, 2024.
- The project must not be adjoined to any site significantly dedicated to industrial use.
- The project must comply with all applicable state building standards, including fire and life safety standards.
- The project must provide off-street parking of one space per unit, unless a state law or local ordinance provides for a lower standard of parking.
- The project must not require the demolition of any existing residential units that are subject to rent control or occupied by lower income households within the past five years.
- The project must not require the demolition of any historic structures that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources.
- The project must not be located on a site that contains wetlands, coastal zones, very high fire hazard severity zones, earthquake fault zones, special flood hazard areas, endangered species habitats, or lands under conservation easement.
- The project must not have a significant effect on the environment according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

❖ **What are the affordability requirements for a housing development project under SB 4?**

- The project must have 100% of the units, exclusive of manager units, affordable to lower income households.
- The units must be offered at affordable rent or affordable housing cost, as set in amounts not exceeding 30% of 120% of area median income adjusted for household size.
- The affordability restrictions must be recorded as covenants for at least 55 years for rental units and at least 45 years for owner-occupied units.

Ventura County Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice  
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