Senate Bill No. 1211

CHAPTER 296

An act to amend Sections 66313, 66314, and 66323 of the Government Code, relating to land use.

[Approved by Governor September 19, 2024. Filed with Secretary of State September 19, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1211, Skinner. Land use: accessory dwelling units: ministerial approval.

Existing law, the Planning and Zoning Law, authorizes a local agency, by ordinance, to provide for the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in areas zoned for residential use, as specified. That law prohibits, if a local agency adopts an ordinance to create ADUs in those zones, the local agency from requiring the replacement of offstreet parking spaces if a garage, carport, or covered parking structure is demolished in conjunction with the construction of, or is converted to, an ADU.

This bill would also prohibit the local agency from requiring the replacement of offstreet parking spaces if an uncovered parking space is demolished in conjunction with the construction of, or is converted to, an ADU.

Existing law requires ministerial approval of ADUs, as specified. Under existing law, a local agency is also required to ministerially approve an application for a building permit within a residential or mixed-use zone to create any of specified variations of ADUs. Existing law imposes various requirements and restrictions on a local agency in connection with the ministerial approval of an application for a building permit for an ADU under these specified variations.

This bill would prohibit a local agency from imposing any objective development or design standard that is not authorized by these provisions upon any ADU that meets the requirements of any of the specified variations.

Under existing law, one of the above-described variations requires a local agency to ministerially approve a certain number of multiple ADUs within the portion of existing multifamily dwelling structures that are not used as livable space if each unit complies with state building standards for dwellings.

This bill would define “livable space” for purposes of the provisions governing ADUs to mean a space in a dwelling intended for human habitation, including living, sleeping, eating, cooking, or sanitation.

Under existing law, another one of the above-described variations requires a local agency to ministerially approve not more than 2 ADUs that are located on a lot that has an existing or proposed multifamily dwelling, but are detached from that dwelling, and are subject to a height limitation and rear yard and side setbacks, as specified.

This bill would instead authorize, under that variation, up to 8 detached ADUs to be created on a lot with an existing multifamily dwelling, provided that the number of ADUs does not exceed the number of existing units on the lot, and up to 2 detached ADUs on a lot with a proposed multifamily dwelling.

By imposing new duties on local governments with respect to the approval of accessory dwelling units, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Digest Key

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

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Bill Text

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 66313 of the Government Code is amended to read:

66313. For purposes of this chapter:

(a) "Accessory dwelling unit" means an attached or a detached residential dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons and is located on a lot with a proposed or existing primary residence. It shall include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation on the same parcel as the single-family or multifamily dwelling is or will be situated. An accessory dwelling unit also includes the following:

(1) An efficiency unit.

(2) A manufactured home, as defined in Section 18007 of the Health and Safety Code.

(b) "Accessory structure" means a structure that is accessory and incidental to a dwelling located on the same lot.

(c) "Efficiency unit" has the same meaning as defined in Section 17958.1 of the Health and Safety Code.

(d) "Junior accessory dwelling unit" means a unit that is no more than 500 square feet in size and contained entirely within a single-family residence. A junior accessory dwelling unit may include separate sanitation facilities, or may share sanitation facilities with the existing structure.

(e) "Livable space" means a space in a dwelling intended for human habitation, including living, sleeping, eating, cooking, or sanitation.

(f) "Living area" means the interior habitable area of a dwelling unit, including basements and attics, but does not include a garage or any accessory structure.

(g) "Local agency" means a city, county, or city and county, whether general law or chartered.

(h) "Nonconforming zoning condition" means a physical improvement on a property that does not conform to current zoning standards.

(i) "Objective standards" means standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official prior to submittal.

(j) “Passageway” means a pathway that is unobstructed clear to the sky and extends from a street to one entrance of the accessory dwelling unit.

(k) “Permitting agency” means any entity that is involved in the review of a permit for an accessory dwelling unit or junior accessory dwelling unit and for which there is no substitute, including, but not limited to, applicable planning departments, building departments, utilities, and special districts.

(l) “Proposed dwelling” means a dwelling that is the subject of a permit application and that meets the requirements for permitting.

(m) “Public transit” means a location, including, but not limited to, a bus stop or train station, where the public may access buses, trains, subways, and other forms of transportation that charge set fares, run on fixed routes, and are available to the public.

(n) “Tandem parking” means that two or more automobiles are parked on a driveway or in any other location on a lot, lined up behind one another.

SEC. 2. Section 66314 of the Government Code is amended to read:

66314. A local agency may, by ordinance, provide for the creation of accessory dwelling units in areas zoned to allow single-family or multifamily dwelling residential use. The ordinance shall do all of the following:

(a) Designate areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency where accessory dwelling units may be permitted. The designation of areas may be based on the adequacy of water and sewer services and the impact of accessory dwelling units on traffic flow and public safety. A local agency that does not provide water or sewer services shall consult with the local water or sewer service provider regarding the adequacy of water and sewer services before designating an area where accessory dwelling units may be permitted.

(b) (1) Impose objective standards on accessory dwelling units that include, but are not limited to, parking, height, setback, landscape, architectural review, maximum size of a unit, and standards that prevent adverse impacts on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources. These standards shall not include requirements on minimum lot size.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a local agency may reduce or eliminate parking requirements for any accessory dwelling unit located within its jurisdiction.

(c) Provide that accessory dwelling units do not exceed the allowable density for the lot upon which the accessory dwelling unit is located, and that accessory dwelling units are a residential use that is consistent with the existing general plan and zoning designation for the lot.

(d) Require the accessory dwelling units to comply with all of the following:

(1) Except as provided in Article 4 (commencing with Section 66340), the accessory dwelling unit may be rented separate from the primary residence, but shall not be sold or otherwise conveyed separate from the primary residence.

(2) The lot is zoned to allow single-family or multifamily dwelling residential use and includes a proposed or existing dwelling.

(3) The accessory dwelling unit is either attached to, or located within, the proposed or existing primary dwelling, including attached garages, storage areas or similar uses, or an accessory structure or detached from the proposed or existing primary dwelling and located on the same lot as the proposed or existing primary dwelling, including detached garages.

(4) If there is an existing primary dwelling, the total floor area of an attached accessory dwelling unit shall not exceed 50 percent of the existing primary dwelling.

(5) The total floor area for a detached accessory dwelling unit shall not exceed 1,200 square feet.

(6) No passageway shall be required in conjunction with the construction of an accessory dwelling unit.

(7) No setback shall be required for an existing living area or accessory structure or a structure constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure that is converted to an accessory dwelling unit or to a portion of an accessory dwelling unit, and a setback of no more than four feet from the side and rear lot lines shall be required for an accessory dwelling unit that is not converted from an existing structure or a new structure constructed in the same location and to the same dimensions as an existing structure.

(8) Local building code requirements that apply to detached dwellings, except that the construction of an accessory dwelling unit shall not constitute a Group R occupancy change under the local building code, as described in Section 310 of the California Building Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), unless the building official or enforcement agency of the local agency makes a written finding based on substantial evidence in the record that the construction of the accessory dwelling unit could have a specific, adverse impact on public health and safety. Nothing in this paragraph shall be interpreted to prevent a local agency from changing the occupancy code of a space that was unhabitable space or was only permitted for nonresidential use and was subsequently converted for residential use pursuant to this article.

(9) Approval by the local health officer where a private sewage disposal system is being used, if required.

(10) (A) Parking requirements for accessory dwelling units shall not exceed one parking space per accessory dwelling unit or per bedroom, whichever is less. These spaces may be provided as tandem parking on a driveway.

(B) Offstreet parking shall be permitted in setback areas in locations determined by the local agency or through tandem parking, unless specific findings are made that parking in setback areas or tandem parking is not feasible based upon specific site or regional topographical or fire and life safety conditions.

(C) This subparagraph shall not apply to an accessory dwelling unit that is described in Section 66322.

(11) When a garage, carport, covered parking structure, or uncovered parking space is demolished in conjunction with the construction of an accessory dwelling unit or converted to an accessory dwelling unit, the local agency shall not require that those offstreet parking spaces be replaced.

(12) Accessory dwelling units shall not be required to provide fire sprinklers if they are not required for the primary residence. The construction of an accessory dwelling unit shall not trigger a requirement for fire sprinklers to be installed in the existing primary dwelling.

(e) Require that a demolition permit for a detached garage that is to be replaced with an accessory dwelling unit be reviewed with the application for the accessory dwelling unit and issued at the same time.

(f) An accessory dwelling unit ordinance shall not require, and the applicant shall not be otherwise required, to provide written notice or post a placard for the demolition of a detached garage that is to be replaced with an accessory dwelling unit, unless the property is located within an architecturally and historically significant historic district.

SEC. 3. Section 66323 of the Government Code is amended to read:

66323. (a) Notwithstanding Sections 66314 to 66322, inclusive, a local agency shall ministerially approve an application for a building permit within a residential or mixed-use zone to create any of the following:

(1) One accessory dwelling unit and one junior accessory dwelling unit per lot with a proposed or existing single-family dwelling if all of the following apply:

(A) The accessory dwelling unit or junior accessory dwelling unit is within the proposed space of a single-family dwelling or existing space of a single-family dwelling or accessory structure and may include an expansion of not more than 150 square feet beyond the same physical dimensions as the existing accessory structure. An expansion beyond the physical dimensions of the existing accessory structure shall be limited to accommodating ingress and egress.

(B) The space has exterior access from the proposed or existing single-family dwelling.

(C) The side and rear setbacks are sufficient for fire and safety.

(D) The junior accessory dwelling unit complies with the requirements of Article 3 (commencing with Section 66333).

(2) One detached, new construction, accessory dwelling unit that does not exceed four-foot side and rear yard setbacks for a lot with a proposed or existing single-family dwelling. The accessory dwelling unit may be combined with a junior accessory dwelling unit described in paragraph (1). A local agency may impose the following conditions on the accessory dwelling unit:

(A) A total floor area limitation of not more than 800 square feet.

(B) A height limitation as provided in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 66321, as applicable.

(3) (A) Multiple accessory dwelling units within the portions of existing multifamily dwelling structures that are not used as livable space, including, but not limited to, storage rooms, boiler rooms, passageways, attics, basements, or garages, if each unit complies with state building standards for dwellings.

(B) A local agency shall allow at least one accessory dwelling unit within an existing multifamily dwelling and shall allow up to 25 percent of the existing multifamily dwelling units.

(4) (A) (i) Multiple accessory dwelling units, not to exceed the number specified in clause (ii) or (iii), as applicable, that are located on a lot that has an existing or proposed multifamily dwelling, but are detached from that multifamily dwelling and are subject to a height limitation in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 66321, as applicable, and rear yard and side setbacks of no more than four feet.

(ii) On a lot with an existing multifamily dwelling, not more than eight detached accessory dwelling units. However, the number of accessory dwelling units allowable pursuant to this clause shall not exceed the number of existing units on the lot.

(iii) On a lot with a proposed multifamily dwelling, not more than two detached accessory dwelling units.

(B) If the existing multifamily dwelling has a rear or side setback of less than four feet, the local agency shall not require any modification of the existing multifamily dwelling as a condition of approving the application to construct an accessory dwelling unit that satisfies the requirements of this paragraph.

(b) A local agency shall not impose any objective development or design standard that is not authorized by this section upon any accessory dwelling unit that meets the requirements of any of paragraphs (1) to (4), inclusive, of subdivision (a).

(c) A local agency shall not require, as a condition for ministerial approval of a permit application for the creation of an accessory dwelling unit or a junior accessory dwelling unit, the correction of nonconforming zoning conditions.

(d) The installation of fire sprinklers shall not be required in an accessory dwelling unit if sprinklers are not required for the primary residence. The construction of an accessory dwelling unit shall not trigger a requirement for fire sprinklers to be installed in the existing multifamily dwelling.

(e) A local agency shall require that a rental of the accessory dwelling unit created pursuant to this section be for a term longer than 30 days.

(f) A local agency may require, as part of the application for a permit to create an accessory dwelling unit connected to an onsite wastewater treatment system, a percolation test completed within the last five years, or, if the percolation test has been recertified, within the last 10 years.

(g) Notwithstanding Section 66321 and subdivision (a) a local agency that has adopted an ordinance by July 1, 2018, providing for the approval of accessory dwelling units in multifamily dwelling structures shall ministerially consider a permit application to construct an accessory dwelling unit that is described in subdivision (a), and may impose objective standards including, but not limited to, design, development, and historic standards on said accessory dwelling units. These standards shall not include requirements on minimum lot size.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because a local agency or school district has the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to pay for the program or level of service mandated by this act, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code.