



CITY OF MERCED

MERCED

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Christopher Ward
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 5240
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 253: California Residential Private Permitting Review Act – Notice of OPPOSE
(As amended March 13, 2025)**

Dear Assembly Member Ward:

The City of Merced must respectfully oppose Assembly Bill 253, which would mandate new procedures for building departments and allow applicants for residential building permits to bypass local plan check processes under certain timelines. While we recognize the bill's intent to accelerate housing production and reduce permitting delays, AB 253 undermines local control, imposes new unfunded administrative burdens, and creates liability concerns for local governments.

Under AB 253, if a city estimates that its residential plan check will exceed 30 days—or fails to complete the review within that timeframe—an applicant would be authorized to contract with a private professional to perform the plan check. The bill then requires the local building department to either issue the permit or respond within 14 days of receiving the third-party report, or the permit is deemed approved. This default approval mechanism raises significant concerns, particularly for complex infill projects that require nuanced interpretation of local development standards and zoning codes. It also transfers responsibility for plan accuracy and code compliance to private professionals without adequate oversight or accountability mechanisms.

AB 253 would also require the City of Merced to prepare and publicly post residential permit fee schedules and estimate turnaround times for each application, regardless of project complexity or staffing availability. These new administrative obligations will require changes to internal processes, increase staff workload, and potentially divert resources from other critical functions—all without providing any funding to support implementation.

The City remains committed to improving housing production and streamlining our permitting processes. However, AB 253 imposes a rigid, one-size-fits-all mandate on local governments and erodes our ability to ensure safe, code-compliant construction in our community. For these reasons, the City must respectfully oppose AB 253.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. If you should have any questions please contact Sharon Gonsalves at California Public Policy Group (916) 974-9270.



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Sincerely,

Mayor,
City of Merced

CC: Member and Staff of the Senate Committee on Housing, and Local Government
The Honorable Anna Caballero, Senator 14th District