

From: WAKE UP CALIFORNIA [amylkalish@249826007.mailchimpapp.com](mailto:amylkalish@249826007.mailchimpapp.com)  
Subject: WAKE UP CA Newsletter 17 - August 9, 2026  
Date: Aug 9, 2026 at 10:30:00 PM  
To: [amylkalish@gmail.com](mailto:amylkalish@gmail.com)

---



### Newsletter Number 17

## ZONING HOLIDAY

The penalty for defending your town  
is set by the size of the building  
you're defending it from

**[www.wakeca.org](http://www.wakeca.org)**

*Affordability, Safety, and Local Accountability*

---

Builder's remedy (a "zoning holiday") fines are set by unit count — the bigger the project, the higher the fine. This project has **665 units**; with the minimum fine of \$10,000 per unit: **\$6.65 million**. Other costs follow.

### IN THE FIELD

## Menlo Park: The Attorney General Steps In



*Proposed: Willow Park — housing, retail, office and hotel, the tallest tower at 458 feet.  
Rendering by SCB, from N17's SB 330 application to Menlo Park.*



*Sunset's single-story campus wrapped around its garden, surrounded by single-family homes and tree canopy in every direction. Aerial imagery: Google Earth, © 2026 Google.*

At the former Sunset Magazine campus in Menlo Park, developer **N17** is proposing 665 homes plus hotel, office and commercial uses in towers reaching 458 feet.

Menlo Park has disputed the project's eligibility under several state housing laws since 2023. On July 29, Attorney General Rob Bonta's office concluded that the city violated state housing law in its handling of the project, including its application of AB 2011 and builder's remedy protections.

The AG also concluded that the project may qualify for builder's remedy and Density Bonus Law protections despite its hotel component, potentially limiting the city's ability to enforce local height restrictions.

On August 3, N17 notified the city that it intends to sue and is seeking

approval under a 90-day timeline it says began with the AG's letter.

**Why it matters:** Menlo Park is becoming a real-world test of how California's expanding housing laws interact — and how much authority cities retain when they push back.

**[Read our blog post: Builder's Remedy Gets Real in This Menlo Park "Zoning Holiday"](#)**

---

HELD HOSTAGE TO HCD TURNAROUND TIMES

**The HCD housing element turnaround processes are long, and leave cities vulnerable — even if the result is certification.**

---

## WAKE UP Zoom

Monday, August 10 · 5:00 PM

We take this up on Monday:

The Builder's Remedy Comes to Menlo Park.

What happens when a city challenges a major housing project — and the Attorney General steps in?

**REGISTER FOR THE ZOOM**

**Already registered once?** Look for the confirmation link Zoom emailed you — you can reuse that same link every time. No need to register again.

**LAST MONDAY'S CALL**

# A Conversation with Assemblymember Damon Connolly

Last Monday, WAKE UP CALIFORNIA welcomed Assemblymember **Damon Connolly** for a discussion about CEQA, housing and the state’s growing “abundance agenda.”

Connolly strongly defended CEQA as an important tool for environmental protection and public participation, while questioning claims that it is a primary cause of California’s housing affordability crisis.

He also discussed last year’s major CEQA changes. **SB 131** exempted certain advanced-manufacturing projects from CEQA. Connolly is now coauthoring **SB 954**, which would restore environmental safeguards for some of those projects.

There is no comparable legislation restoring CEQA review for qualifying housing projects exempted under **AB 130**.

Connolly described California’s evolving housing-policy landscape as “very haphazard.”

For WAKE UP, the takeaway is simple: California can build more housing without abandoning environmental review, public participation and accountability.

For more on Connolly, CEQA and legislative fixes, see our blog post: [\*\*A Conversation with Assemblymember Damon Connolly — CEQA\*\*](#)

---

**ACT ON THIS**

## **SB 954 Is on Suspense**

SB 954 is now on the Assembly Appropriations suspense file and could be

held without ever reaching the Assembly floor.

The bill would restore environmental safeguards for certain advanced-manufacturing projects exempted from CEQA. There is still no comparable legislation restoring CEQA review removed for qualifying housing projects under AB 130.

A **March 2026 survey** of 600 likely November voters found **72 percent approve of CEQA**. Asked about the advanced manufacturing exemption specifically, **64 percent disapproved**.

**And 64 percent said they would be less likely to support a legislator who backed the exemption.**

**ACT BEFORE THURSDAY, AUGUST 13**

Ask Assembly Appropriations Chair **Buffy Wicks** to release SB 954 from suspense and allow the full Assembly to vote.

**Chair Buffy Wicks, Assembly Appropriations**  
**(916) 319-2081**

Then contact your own Assemblymember and ask them to support SB 954. **WAKE UP CALIFORNIA supports SB 954.**

**Find your Assemblymember** through the California Legislature's representative finder.

**MORE ON CEQA**

→ **PCL's CEQA campaign**

- [The CEQA Works Coalition](#)
  - [The advanced manufacturing poll](#)
  - [CEQA by the Numbers: Myths and Facts](#) — Rose Foundation
- 

#### WHO'S SPEAKING

## Steve Linke on Bike Lanes and SB 569

### The bill moved while we were watching.

Former traffic commissioner and WAKE UP research team member **Steve Linke** gave an in-depth review of bike lanes and SB 569 (Blakespear). Since that presentation, the bill has moved.

SB 569 is a gut-and-amend bill that spent 16 months as legislation about clearing homeless camps. It passed the Senate 38–0. Then on June 11 it was gutted by Senator Blakespear, and the text was completely changed to govern restrictions on local governments' ability to modify or remove bikeways.

As amended, a city cannot remove or reduce the physical protection of a Class I, II, III, or IV bikeway unless it replaces it with infrastructure providing equal or greater safety and connectivity — after a safety analysis, a Level of Traffic Stress analysis, public findings, and a comment period. The bill declares this a matter of statewide concern, so it reaches charter cities too.

This applies to projects that accept General Fund dollars, and bars changes for 20 years.

June 22/24 amendments cover bikeways built with any State General Fund money for up to 20 years and bars changes that revert them to a non-active-

transportation use or reduce safety, accessibility or mobility for nonmotorized users.

There are no exceptions, even for evacuations. A covenant on a bikeway becomes a covenant on the roadway — and in fire-prone areas those roadways are the evacuation route. If a city wants a trial of a bike route, it had better think twice if safety or traffic conditions could change.

SB 569 cleared the Assembly Transportation Committee 13–2 and was ordered to third reading on July 1. **It is on the Assembly Floor now.**

#### FROM OUR PARTNERS — SHIFT BAY AREA

From Los Angeles to Pacifica, at least 30 cities and towns are reporting fiscal stress at unprecedented levels. Twenty-five have placed new tax measures on the November ballot. **Eight have now declared a fiscal emergency.**

### SHIFT Seminar: What is Pushing Cities Over the Fiscal Cliff — Part 1

**When:** Saturday, August 15 at 10:00 AM

**Where:** Via Zoom — [join the meeting here](#)

Guest speaker Mark Moses will present insights on this fiscal crisis from his book, *The Municipal Financial Crisis: A Framework for Understanding and Fixing Government Budgeting*.

More about Moses at [munifinanceguy.com](http://munifinanceguy.com) • More from SHIFT at [shift-ba.org](http://shift-ba.org)

#### WORTH WATCHING

### Chan vs. Wiener — Congressional Debate

**When:** [Thursday, October 1 at 7:30 PM](#)

**Where:** Free livestream on the KQED Live YouTube channel — register at [kqed.org/live](https://www.kqed.org/live). In-person seating is sold out.

Supervisor Connie Chan and State Senator Scott Wiener meet for the District 11 seat Nancy Pelosi is vacating. Housing affordability is on the agenda. Wiener authored SB 423, SB 79, and SB 610; Chan voted against San Francisco's Family Zoning upzoning plan. Moderated by KQED's Marisa Lagos and Scott Shafer with the Chronicle's Joe Garofoli.

*Can't make it live: rebroadcast on KQED 9 October 9 at 8:00 PM, KQED 88.5 FM October 2 at 8:00 PM, and as a Political Breakdown podcast episode.*

## Why WAKE UP now?

Most people learn about state housing laws when the bulldozers show up. WAKE UP CA helps you understand the laws, legislation and decisions earlier — while the plans are still being made, and you still have agency to influence them.

### SUPPORT THE WORK

## As we grow, so do our expenses

Your donation directly impacts our ability to continue to do this work.

### DONATE TO WAKE UP

WAKE UP CALIFORNIA is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization. Contributions are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.

## — *Amy Kalish, President and Founder*

*Affordability, Safety, and Local Accountability*

---

### SAVE THE DATES

**Monday, August 10** · The builder's remedy, and Sunset / Menlo Park

**Monday, August 17** · Topic to be announced

**Monday, August 24** · Historic Preservationist Bridget Maley

**Monday, August 31 and Monday, September 7** · **ON BREAK**

---

---

WAKE UP CALIFORNIA · [35 Miller Avenue, #574, Mill Valley, CA 94941](#)

A volunteer-run 501(c)(4) nonprofit

[wakeca.org](http://wakeca.org) · [info.WAKEUPCA@gmail.com](mailto:info.WAKEUPCA@gmail.com) · [Unsubscribe](#)

