



What now for dense housing near transit?

By Debra Kahn, Politico, March 27, 2020

“The coronavirus could have a chilling effect on the state’s efforts to build more apartments near public transportation to solve its housing crisis.

“Gov. Gavin Newsom and Democratic leaders have championed urban housing as a way to address the ever-rising cost of living in California.

“The Democrats’ argument had been gaining traction, especially among younger residents desperate for cheaper housing and less inured to car ownership. It was also a weapon in Newsom’s fight against homelessness.

“But the coronavirus will likely stand in the way of that momentum. Opponents of infill and transit-oriented development are blaming population density as a primary factor behind the pandemic’s spread in urban areas.

“ ‘I think it’s absolutely going to impact people’s appetite for housing density,’ said Susan Kirsch, founder of the group Livable California.

“For two years, battle lines have been drawn over bills by Sen. Scott Wiener, a San Francisco Democrat. ‘Of course people will abuse the coronavirus pandemic for other political goals,’ Wiener said. ‘This contagion is not about whether you live in a densely populated area or a less densely populated area; it’s about whether you have a good public health response to a pandemic, and Hong Kong and Singapore had a fantastic response,’ Wiener said. ‘The U.S. did not.’

“ ‘California’s set up so every single potential risk under the sun exists somewhere in the state,’ said Dan Dunmoyer, president and CEO of the California Building Industry Association. ‘You push people out of the wildland into the urban lands, you have the biggest seismic risk possible. ... You go back to the urban areas, you’ve got Covid.’ ”

[Read more here.](#) (6 min)