## SB 35 Process Overview and Eligibility Checklist (Government Code Section 65913.4)

**April 2024**

## Overview

Senate Bill (SB) 35 established a streamlined ministerial approval process for certain multifamily housing development projects that meet the criteria outlined in Government Code Section 65913.4. Eligible projects must comply with objective planning standards, provide specified levels of affordable housing, and meet other requirements. This document provides a step-by-step overview of the SB 35 processing procedure and includes an eligibility checklist that staff or a potential applicant can reference to determine whether a proposed project is eligible for streamlined approval. Recent changes to Government Code Section 65913.4 resulting from SB 423 are reflected throughout.

# PURPOSE

The purpose of this material is to provide guidance, which agencies and other entities may use at their discretion. This guidance does not alter lead agency discretion in decision-making, independent judgment and analysis, and preparing environmental documents for project or governmental action subject to CEQA requirements. This material is for general information only and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion.

# SUMMARY OF SB 35 PROCESS

## STATUTORY DETERMINATION

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is required to make a determination that a local jurisdiction is subject to the streamlined application review process under Government Code section 65913.4. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65913.4, local jurisdictions that do not have a compliant housing element, that have had insufficient progress towards their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), and/or that have not submitted the latest Annual Progress Report (APR) on their housing element, are required to provide a streamlined ministerial review process for qualifying multifamily housing projects. Local jurisdictions can confirm applicability of SB 35 based on HCD’s latest Statewide Determination Summary: <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/statutory-determinations>.

## **PRESUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants and local governments are required to complete associated presubmittal requirements before an SB 35 Application may be submitted. This includes submittal of a formal notice of intent/preliminary application, tribal consultation, and a required public meeting if the project is in a qualifying location.

### Notice of Intent / Preliminary Application

Before an SB 35 application can be submitted, an applicant must submit a notice of intent in the form of a preliminary application that includes all of the information described in Government Code section 65941.1 as existing on January 1, 2020.[[1]](#footnote-2)  HCD provides a standardized preliminary application for housing development projects, which can be customized by local governments. For more information, see: [www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/statutory-determinations](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/statutory-determinations).

**Note:** *Local governments using HCD’s preliminary application should consider adding a space on the preliminary application for applicants to indicate whether the applicant is submitting the preliminary application as a notice of intent for SB 35, since a preliminary application may be submitted for other purposes.*

### Tribal Consultation

Within 30 days of the completed notice of intent/preliminary application, the local agency must contact the Native American Heritage Commission to identify Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the area of the site. The local agency must invite identified tribes to participate in a formal scoping consultation. Tribes then have 30 days to request a scoping consultation. If no consultation is requested, the project is eligible to submit an SB 35 application. If consultation is requested, the local agency will initiate the consultation within 30 days of receipt of the request.

An SB 35 application cannot be submitted until the notice and scoping consultation is complete and either an agreement is reached, or no tribe elects to participate in a scoping consultation. Once the scoping consultation begins, there is no time limit for approval. If agreement cannot be reached between the local jurisdiction and the tribes, no SB 35 application may be submitted. For more details, Government Code Section 65913.4(b) describes the principles applicable to the scoping consultation.

**Possible outcomes of scoping consultation:**

1. The project is eligible for SB 35 application process if:
   1. Parties agree that no potential tribal cultural resource would be affected; or
   2. A potential tribal cultural resource could be affected, and an enforceable agreement is documented between the tribe and local jurisdiction on methods, measures, and conditions for tribal cultural resource treatment. The local jurisdiction must ensure that the agreement is included in the conditions of approval.
   3. A tribe accepted the invitation but failed to engage in the scoping consultation after repeated documented attempts by the local jurisdiction to engage the tribe.
2. The project is not eligible for SB 35 application process if a potential tribal cultural resource could be affected, and the tribes and local jurisdiction do not document an enforceable agreement; or if there is disagreement about whether a tribal cultural resource exists.

### Public Meeting

A local jurisdiction must hold a public meeting at a regular City Council / Board of Supervisors meeting before an application can be submitted, if the project is in a moderate resource area, low resource area, or an area of high segregation and poverty—as determined by the most recent “CTCAC/HCD Opportunity Map” published by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.[[2]](#footnote-3) For cities or an unincorporated area of a county with a population greater than 250,000 people, the meeting may be held by the jurisdiction’s Planning Commission.

The applicant must attend the meeting and provide a written statement in its SB 35 application that they reviewed oral and written testimony. If the local government fails to hold the hearing within 45 days after receiving the notice of intent, the applicant then has a duty to hold a public meeting on the project before submitting an application.

## **SB 35 APPLICATION SUBMITTAL AND REVIEW**

### Required Application

The developer is eligible to submit an SB 35 application once the tribal consultation and public meeting, if required, are completed. An application typically includes evidence that the project is eligible for SB 35 review and any other required application materials, usually the same as those required for the agency’s last discretionary approval, such as design or site plan approval. If a subdivision is included, subdivision application materials must also be submitted. An example SB 35 Eligibility Checklist is provided below as a guide to help applicants and local agencies determine if a project is eligible for streamlined processing under SB 35. If an applicant meets all the criteria included in the SB 35 Eligibility Checklist, then they must provide the required application materials. Applicants will need to confirm specific requirements with a local jurisdiction’s planning department to determine the requirements for a formal SB 35 application.

### Review for Completeness

Local jurisdictions must review applications for completeness within 30 days of submittal. If the application is determined to be incomplete, the staff shall provide the applicant with an exhaustive list of items that were not complete. If the local jurisdiction does not respond within 30 days, the application is “deemed complete” (Government Code Section 65943).

### Review for Consistency

Local jurisdictions must review complete applications for consistency with SB 35 requirements and any local objective standards (as defined in Government Code Section 65913.4). The review must be completed within:

* 60 days of application submittal for projects of 150 or fewer units, or
* 90 days of application submittal for projects containing more than 150 units.

Local jurisdictions must provide written documentation to the applicant within these timeframes. The written documentation must detail which objective SB 35 requirements and city/county objective standards are not met by the project and how the project conflicts with the standards, or indicate that the project is consistent with all SB 35 requirements and objective standards. Comments from all city/county departments that are required to approve the development and evaluate compliance with objective standards must be provided within the time limits listed above. If the local jurisdiction does not respond within the required timelines, the application is “deemed consistent” with objective standards.

**Note:** *If an applicant does not submit a complete application, a problem may arise if the applicant submits additional information at a point where there is insufficient time to examine revised plans before the end of the statutory deadline. Agencies may wish to indicate on their application forms how much time an applicant has to submit new information after receiving a letter of incompletion or clarify that any new submittal is considered a new application for purposes of the time limits.*

**Applicable Standards**

Local jurisdicitions cannot apply any standards that are imposed only on projects using SB 35. CEQA does not apply to an eligible project. A project may only be reviewed for consistency with objective planning standards. In addition, local agencies are prohibited from requiring compliance with any other standards necessary to receive a postentitlement permit (e.g., a building permit) prior to approval of the application. Any additional studies, information, or materials that do not pertain directly to determining whether the project is consistent with objective planning standards are also prohibited.

**Consistency Determination**

If the local agency determines that the project is consistent, the application shall be approved. If the application is not consistent with objective standards or SB 35 requirements, or if there is insufficient information to make the determination, the jurisdiction may deny the application, but the applicant may reapply or apply under ordinary discretionary review, as applicable. If the planning director or equivalent position determines that the project is consistent, the city must approve the development.

### Optional Design Review

Design review may be conducted by the body responsible for design review so long as the review is objective and focused on assessing compliance with objective standards. Design review cannot "inhibit, chill, or preclude" ministerial SB 35 approval. Design review must be conducted within:

* 90 days of application submittal for projects of 150 or fewer units, or
* 180 days of application submittal for projects with more than 150 units.

### Design review is usually undertaken after a project has been found to be consistent with all objective standards and other SB 35 requirements. Since a determination has already been made regarding the project’s consistency with objective standards, design review cannot really change the conclusions.

### Project Approval

If the project conforms with all objective standards and SB 35 requirements, a determination must be made within the time limits listed in Step 6. Standard conditions of approval may be applied to the project. In addition, other conditions can be applied to implement the provisions of SB 35 (such as prevailing wage and affordable housing requirements), as required to comply with local objective standards, and to obtain a postentitlement permit. The approval shall not expire if at least 50 percent of the units are affordable to households making 80 percent of annual median income or less and includes a public investment beyond tax credits.

For other projects, the approval will remain valid for three years from date of the SB 35 approval or final judgment upholding the approval if litigation is filed. The permit remains valid so long as construction, including demolition and grading, has begun under a valid permit and is “in progress,” as defined in Government Code Section 65913.4(g)(2)(A). A one-year extension may be granted if the owner has made “significant progress” toward getting construction ready.

## POST-APPROVAL MODIFICATIONS AND PERMITS

### Modifications to the Original Project

After the project has been approved, the applicant may request modifications before the issuance of the final building permit required for construction. A jurisdiction must determine if the requested modification is consistent with the objective planning standards in effect when the original application was submitted, and either approve or deny the modification request within 60 days after submission of the modification, or within 90 days if design review is required.

A local jurisdiction may apply objective planning standards adopted after the application was first submitted to the requested modification in any of the following instances:

* the modification would increase the number of units or square footage of construction by at least 15 percent, not including underground space;
* the total number of residential units or total square footage of construction would change by 5 percent or more and it is necessary to subject the project to a new objective standard to mitigate or avoid a specific, adverse impact on health or safety; or
* if the modification request is made before submittal of the first building permit application, the building standards contained at that time in the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) may be applied to the project. Otherwise, SB 35 projects are not required to conform to building codes adopted after the project receives SB 35 approval unless the applicant agrees to do so.

### Postentitlement Permits

Applications for postentitlement permits such as demolition, grading, encroachment, and building permits and for final maps must be processed under state and local standards that were in effect when the preliminary application was submitted, unless the applicant agrees to any change in standards. Review of these permits is subject to the time limits in Government Code Section 65913.3. If public improvements are required on property owned by a local agency, the local agency may not use its discretion to inhibit, chill, or preclude the project.

# Government Code Section 65913.4 (SB 35) Eligibility Checklist

The following checklist is intended as a guide to help applicants and local agencies determine if a project is eligible for streamlined processing under Government Code Section 65913.4. To be eligible, a project must meet **ALL** of the following criteria.

Complete the checklist and describe how the project complies with each of the eligibility requirements.

| **Eligibility Requirements** | **Comply** | **N/A** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Number and Type of Units.** The project must be a multifamily housing development that contains at least two residential units. |  |  | |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 1. **Legal Parcel**. It is a legal parcel or parcels located in a city/county if, and only if, the city/county boundaries include some portion of either an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau. |  |  | |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 1. **Urban Infill**. At least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins parcels that are developed with urban uses. Parcels that are only separated by a street or highway shall be considered to be adjoined. “Urban uses” means any current or former residential, commercial, public institutional, transit or transportation passenger facility, or retail use, or any combination of those uses. |  |  | |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 1. **Residential Use**. At least two-thirds of the square footage of the development is designated for residential use. Additional density, floor area, and units, and any other concession, incentive, or waiver of development standards granted pursuant to the Density Bonus Law in Section 65915 shall be included in the square footage calculation. The square footage of the development shall not include underground space, such as basements or underground parking garages. |  |  | |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| 1. **Zoning and General Plan Designation.** One of the following applies to the site: |  |  |
| * The site is zoned for residential use or residential mixed-use development. |  |  |
| * The site has a general plan designation that allows residential use or a mix of residential and nonresidential uses. |  |  |
| * The site meets the requirements of Section 65852.24 (Middle Class Housing Act of 2022). |  |  |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| 1. **Affordability.** If more than 10 residential units are proposed, the development is subject to a requirement mandating a minimum percentage of the project’s total units[[3]](#footnote-4) for below market rate housing based on one of the following.   **Note:** See the latest SB 35 Statewide Determination Summary for the jurisdictions that are eligible with ≥10 percent affordability and the jurisdictions that are eligible with ≥50 percent affordability. Projects seeking to use SB 35 may also be subject to a local jurisdiction’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, which may have additional requirements. Prior to submitting an application for streamlined review, applicants should confirm the current affordability requirements with a local agency’s planning department.   1. For jurisdictions that have made insufficient progress toward their Above Moderate income RHNA OR Above Moderate and Lower Income RHNA and/or have not submitted the latest Housing Element Annual Progress Report (APR), proposed developments must provide: |  |  |
| For Rent: at least 10 percent of the project’s total unitsmust be dedicated as affordable to households making at or below 50 percent of the area median income. |  |  |
| For Sale: at least 10 percent of the project's total units must be dedicated as affordable to households making at or below 80 percent of the area median income.   1. For jurisdictions that have made insufficient progress toward their Lower income RHNA (Very Low- and Low- income) proposed developments must provide: |  |  |
| For Rent: At least 50 percent of the project's total units must be dedicated as affordable to households making at or below 80 percent of the area median income.  For Sale: at least 50 percent of the project's total units must be dedicated as affordable to households making at or below 80 percent of the area median income. |  |  |
| *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| 1. **Covenant**. If more than 10 residential units are proposed, the applicant must commit to record, prior to issuance of the first building permit, a land use restriction or covenant for the required affordable units providing that the housing shall remain affordable to low- or very low- income households, as applicable, for the following minimum durations, as applicable:   55 years for rental units.  45 years for homeownership units.  *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **8. Site Location.** The project may not be located on a site that is any of the following: |  |  |
| * Either prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, as defined pursuant to United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California, and designated on the maps prepared by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the Department of Conservation, or land zoned or designated for agricultural protection or preservation by a local ballot measure that was approved by City/County of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ voters. |  |  |
| * Wetlands, as defined in the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, Part 660 FW 2 (June 21, 1993). |  |  |
| * Lands identified for conservation in an adopted natural community conservation plan pursuant to the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), habitat conservation plan pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), or other adopted natural resource protection plan. |  |  |
| * Habitat for protected species identified as candidate, sensitive, or species of special status by state or federal agencies, fully protected species, or species protected by the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.), the California Endangered Species Act (Chapter 1.5 (commencing with Section 2050) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code), or the Native Plant Protection Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 1900) of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code). |  |  |
| * Lands under conservation easement. |  |  |
| * A parcel of land or site governed by the Mobilehome Residency Law, the Recreational Vehicle Park Occupancy Law, the Mobilehome Parks Act, or the Special Occupancy Parks Act. |  |  |
| * A site that would require demolition of a historic structure that is on a local, state, or federal register. |  |  |
| * A site that would require demolition of housing that is: |  |  |
| * + Subject to recorded restrictions or law that limits rent to levels affordable to moderate, low, or very-low income households. |  |  |
| * + Subject to rent or price control. |  |  |
| * + Currently occupied by tenants or that was occupied by tenants within the past 10 years. |  |  |
| * A site that previously contained housing occupied by tenants that was demolished within the past 10 years. |  |  |
| * A site that contains housing units that are occupied by tenants, and units at the property are, or were, subsequently offered for sale to the general public by the subdivider or subsequent owner of the property. |  |  |
| [**Note:** *To demonstrate compliance with these provisions, provide history of site uses for the past 10 years. If residences currently or formerly existed on the site in the past 10 years, provide history of occupants for the past 10 years.]*  *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **9. Sites Excluded Unless Standards Are Met**. If the site is located within any of the following zones, the project is not eligible for SB 35 Streamlined Ministerial Review unless the application demonstrates that additional standards have been met, as described below. Please attach any documentation required to demonstrate compliance. |  |  |
| * Within very high fire hazard severity zone, as determined by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to Section 51178, or within the state responsibility area as defined in Public Resources Code Section 4102, unless the site has adopted fire hazard mitigation measures pursuant to existing building standards or state fire mitigation measures applicable to the development, including, but not limited to, standards established under Public Resources Code Sections 4291 or 51182, as applicable, 4290, or Chapter 7A of the California Building Code. |  |  |
| * A hazardous waste site that is listed pursuant to Section 65962.5 or a hazardous waste site designated by the Department of Toxic Substances Control pursuant to Section 25356 of the Health and Safety Code, unless the State Department of Public Health, State Water Resources Control Board, or Department of Toxic Substances Control has cleared the site for residential use or residential mixed-uses. |  |  |
| * A delineated earthquake fault zone as determined by the State Geologist in any official maps published by the State Geologist, unless the development complies with applicable seismic protection building code standards adopted by the California Building Standards Commission under the California Building Standards Law (Part 2.5 (commencing with Section 18901) of Division 13 of the Health and Safety Code), and by any local building department under Chapter 12.2 (commencing with Section 8875) of Division 1 of Title 2. |  |  |
| * A special flood hazard area subject to inundation by the 1 percent annual chance flood (100-year flood) as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in any official maps promulgated by FEMA. However, the proposed development may be located on the site if either of the following are met: |  |  |
| * + the site has been subject to a Letter of Map Revision prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and issued to the local jurisdiction; or |  |  |
| * + the site meets FEMA requirements necessary to meet minimum flood plain management criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program pursuant to Part 59 (commencing with Section 59.1) and Part 60 (commencing with Section 60.1) of Subchapter B of Chapter I of Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations. |  |  |
| * A regulatory floodway as determined by maps promulgated by FEMA unless the development has received a no-rise certification in accordance with Section 60.3(d)(3) of Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations.   *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **10. Coastal Zone** *[Applicable as of January 1, 2025]*. The project is within the coastal zone, but may not be located on a site that is any of the following:   * Located between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea or within 300 feet of the inland extent of any beach or of the mean high tideline of the sea where there is no beach, whichever is the greater distance. * Located on tidelands, submerged lands, public trust lands, within 100 feet of any wetland, estuary, or stream, or within 300 feet of the top of the seaward face of any coastal bluff. * An area of the coastal zone that is not subject to a certified local coastal program or a certified land use plan. * An area of the coastal zone that is vulnerable to five feet of sea level rise, as determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Ocean Protection Council, the United States Geological Survey, the University of California, or a local government’s coastal hazards vulnerability assessment. * Not zoned for multifamily housing. * On, or within a 100-foot radius of, a wetland, as defined in Section 30121 of the Public Resources Code. * On prime agricultural land, as defined in Sections 30113 and 30241 of the Public Resources Code.   For sites that are eligible, a coastal development permit is required.  *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **11. Prevailing Wage.** If the project includes 10 or more units and the project is not in its entirety a public work as defined in Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(A), the project proponent must certify to the local agency that the following are true:   * All construction workers employed in the execution of the development shall be paid at least the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for the type of work and geographic area, as determined by the Director of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code Sections 1773 and 1773.9, except that apprentices registered in programs approved by the Chief of the Division of Apprenticeship Standards may be paid at least the applicable apprentice prevailing rate. * The prevailing wage requirement will be included in **all** work contracts for those portions of the development that are not a public work.   *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **12. Labor Standards.** A project of 50 or more units must meet the labor standards provided in Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(E).  *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |
| **13. Skilled and Trained Workforce.** A project over 85 feet in height above grade must meet the skilled and trained workforce requirements provided in Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(F).  *Compliance Description (Optional):*  Click or tap here to enter text. |  |  |

# Certificate for Compliance with Government Code Section 65913.4 (SB 35) Eligibility Requirements

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, do hereby certify and declare as follows:

1. The subject property is located at (address and assessor's parcel number):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Address Assessor's Parcel Number*

1. I am a duly authorized officer or owner of the subject property.
2. The property owner agrees to comply with the applicable affordable housing dedication requirements established under Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(3) and (a)(4).
3. The property owner agrees to comply with the applicable prevailing wage requirements established under Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(A).
4. The property owner agrees to comply with the applicable labor requirements established under Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(E).
5. The property owner agrees to comply with the applicable skilled and trained workforce requirements established under Government Code Section 65913.4(a)(8)(F).
6. The property owner certifies that the project site has not contained any housing occupied by tenants within 10 years prior to the date written above.
7. The property owner certifies that information submitted to demonstrate compliance with all requirements of Government Code Section 65913.4(a) is true and correct to the best of the owner's knowledge.

**I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the** **foregoing is true and correct.**

Executed on this day in:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Location Date*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Owner’s Signature, Name (Print) Title*

1. Only one change has been made in the list of required information since January 1, 2020. Government Code Section 65941.1(a)(8)(C) previously referenced a hazardous waste site listed pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 or a site designated by the Department of Toxic Substances Control pursuant to Health & Safety Code section 25356. Also, subsection (e) of Government Code Section 65941.1 regarding tribal cultural resources was adopted after January 1, 2020, and so is not applicable to a preliminary application filed for an SB 35 project. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See: <https://www.treasurer.ca.gov/ctcac/opportunity.asp> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. . “Total Units” means number of units prior to calculating any density bonus. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)