

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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## Understanding development in California's Coastal Zone

Obtaining the necessary permits to build in the state's designated [Coastal Zone](#) is much like the rest of the state, except projects are also subject to the [Coastal Act](#). The core intent of this state law is to ensure that new development doesn't degrade sensitive habitats or impede public access to shorelines and beaches.

### Facts:

- A [Coastal Development Permit](#), or CDP, is generally required to build housing or other types of development in the Coastal Zone. All projects must be consistent with the Coastal Act of 1976.
- City and county governments process about 75% of all CDP applications, including for most housing projects. The rest are submitted directly to the California Coastal Commission, which has authority over projects in most submerged or public tidelands, as well as in areas where local jurisdictions have declined their permitting authority.
- The Coastal Commission also hears appeals of locally approved CDPs, on average about 40 to 60 projects a year. However, not all permits in the Coastal Zone are appealable to the commission — only for projects located between the sea and the nearest public road (often Highway 1), or within 300 feet of a coastal bluff or 100 feet of a wetland.
- Claims that the Coastal Commission routinely blocks housing are unfounded. The agency has denied only two multifamily housing projects since 2021, both of which would have required the demolition of existing housing and added no new residential density.
- The Coastal Commission has never denied a 100% affordable housing project. The commission would like to do more to address housing costs, but unfortunately, in the 1980s, the state Legislature stripped the agency of its power to require deed restricted affordable units in new projects.
- Nearly 90 percent of the Coastal Zone is regulated by a [Local Coastal Program](#), or LCP, which are land-use and implementation plans drafted by city and county governments. Local jurisdictions (not the Coastal Commission) use these documents to, among other things, set density and height limits in seaside communities.