



BY-RIGHT APPROVAL FOR LOW BARRIER NAVIGATION CENTERS

Government Code §§ 65660-65668

INTRODUCTION

Low-barrier navigation centers serve as shelters that follow best practices to reduce barriers to entry—such as allowing partners and pets, providing storage, and ensuring privacy—while focusing on transitioning individuals experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and support services.

Low-barrier navigation centers must be processed as a by-right use in mixed-use and nonresidential zones that allow multi-family residential uses.

KEY PROVISIONS

Project Eligibility

To qualify for by-right approval, a low-barrier navigation center must have a plan that identifies staff to provide the services necessary to connect residents to permanent housing. It must also be linked to a coordinated entry system, which is designed to align intake, assessment, and referrals for housing and services. Additionally, the center must comply with Housing First requirements, ensuring that housing is provided without preconditions such as sobriety or treatment participation. Finally, it must have a system for entering information into the local Homeless Management Information System, which tracks and monitors service use.

Approval Timeline

Jurisdictions have 30 days to review an application and notify the applicant if it is complete. Within 60 days of receipt of a completed application, the jurisdiction must approve or deny the application. If the proposed project meets all statutory requirements, the jurisdiction is required to approve it.

RECENT HCD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LETTERS

[City of Watsonville](#),
November 19, 2024

Low-barrier navigation centers must be processed as a by-right use in mixed-use zones and nonresidential zones that allow residential uses. The letter clarifies that the project shall not be subject to any form of discretionary approval. The letter further describes project eligibility criteria and provides statutory examples of “low-barrier.”

The Housing Law Fact Sheets provide an overview of existing laws which the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has statutory authority to enforce. The fact sheet does not constitute legal advice but is intended to be a resource for local agencies and decision-makers within California, including members of City Councils, Boards of Supervisors, and Planning Commissions.

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Interim Housing Act

[SB 1395](#), Becker (2024); amended Gov. Code, §§ 8698.4, 65660, amended Pub. Resource Code, § 21080.27.5, and added Welfare and Institutions Code, § 8255.

SB 1395 updates regulations for Low Barrier Navigation Centers by clarifying that they can be non-congregate and relocatable, expanding flexibility in shelter design. It also removes the 2027 repeal date, making the provisions permanent under state law. These changes aim to ensure continued access to low-barrier shelter options for people experiencing homelessness.