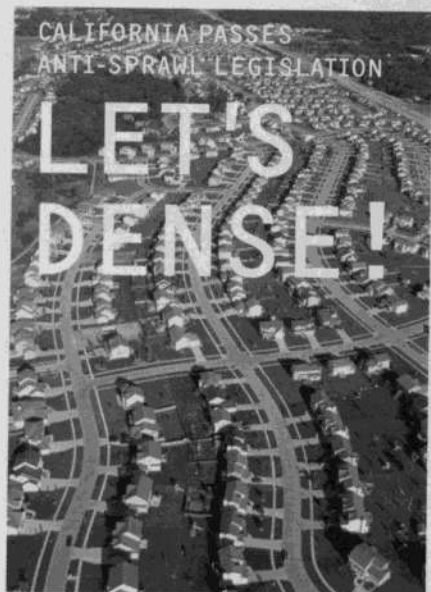


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Could California's boundless sprawl be coming to an end? Don't bet on it, but California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's signing of anti-sprawl measure SB 375 on October 1 could help curb it quite a bit.

The measure, first proposed by State Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), will direct the state's Air Resources Board to set regional greenhouse gas reduction targets and work with planning authorities to set their transportation, housing, and regional land-use plans with greenhouse gas reductions in mind. That means rewarding sustainable, dense, infill, and transit-oriented communities with less strenuous environmental review and more funds, reducing the number **continued on page 4**

of new highways built, and discouraging development on valuable untouched land through reduced transportation funds. It will also call for state agencies to study the effects of new developments on transit patterns and on greenhouse gas emissions.

The bill is basically the land-use extension of AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, passed in 2006 with an aim toward reducing carbon emissions in California to 1990 levels by 2020. Advocates of the new law point out that planning is finally being taken to task for its role in the state's environmental degradation.

"Potentially this is the most far reaching attempt to curb greenhouse gases in a generation," said Michael Woo, consultant to ClimatePlan, a coalition advocating reduced greenhouse gas emissions in California, based on land use and transportation changes. Automobiles are still the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in California, accounting for 30 percent of the total. But lowering emissions is only part of the solution.

For architects, said Woo, the new law could mean more sustainable and infill work, and a chance to create more walkable and livable design. Other changes, he added, will have to play themselves out. "They could relate to parking. They could relate to the mix of residential and commercial." But, he added, "if you were an architect who specializes in tract homes on agricultural lands that might be an obsolete assumption." Woo added that it is still early in the process, and that many of the specifics are yet to be determined.

He warned that much of the effectiveness of the law will rest on its implementation. One discouraging sign: the Air Resources Board was supposed to set greenhouse gas reduction targets by early October, but that release has been delayed.

According to the governor, California is the first state in the country to take on land-use planning related to greenhouse gases. The bill enjoyed fairly high popularity, even among the building industry, particularly because it will help to streamline onerous environmental review, at least for sustainable and affordable projects. **sl**