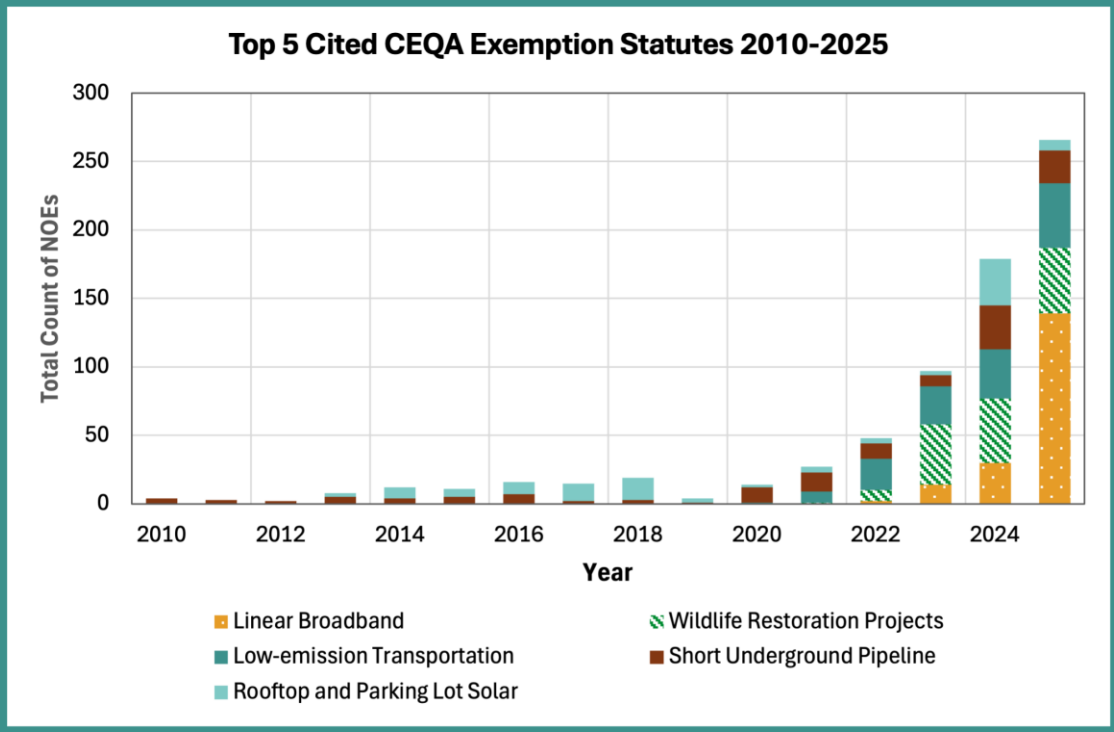
Applied CEQA Exemptions



Only exemptions legislated 2010-2025 were included in this analysis.
Data source: CEQAnet Database, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.

With the rising amount of CEQA exemption legislation in recent years it's vital to understand how these exemptions are applied in practice. Focusing on the exemptions most recently changed by the Legislature, an analysis of publicly available CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) data reveals the top-five most applied CEQA exemption statutes from 2010-2025:

1. Linear Broadband (PRC § 21080.51) – Created by SB 156 (2022), this statute applies to linear broadband within a public right-of-way. Eligible projects must be a part of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) statewide middle-mile broadband network, found within 30 feet of a public right-of-way, include environmental monitoring measures by CPUC and DOT, and follow permitting requirements, the Knee-Nejedly California Wetlands Preservation Act, and CESA.

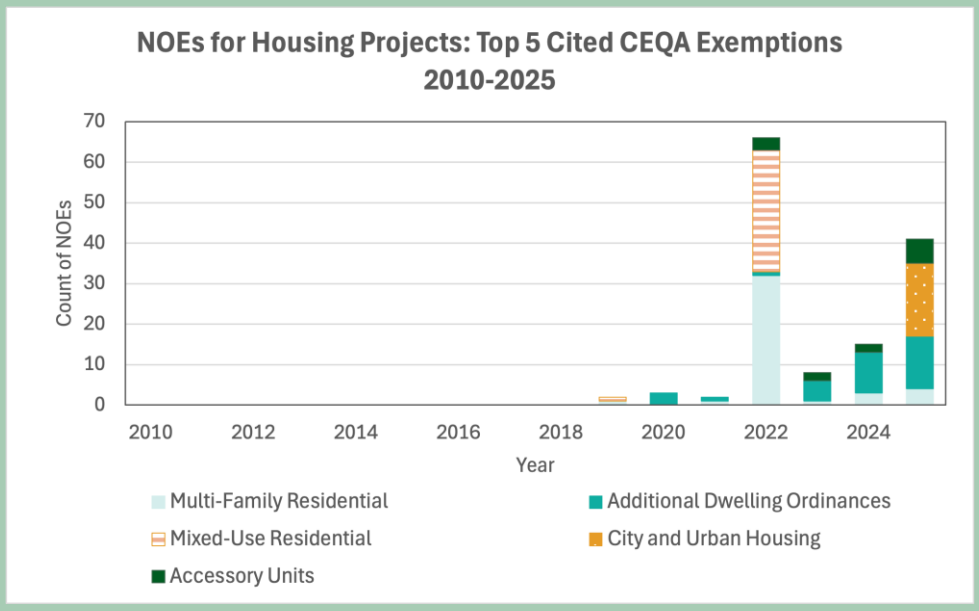
2. Wildlife Restoration Projects (PRC § 21080.56) – Created by SB 155 (2021) and sunsetting in 2030, this code applies to projects that conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife and their habitats.

3. Low-emission Transportation (PRC § 21080.25) – Expanded by AB 2503 (2025) and sunsetting in 2030, this exemption applies to projects that improve urban transportation and reduce emissions. It exempts publicly accessible zero-emission fuel stations, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and specific mass passenger transit projects.

4. Short Underground Pipeline (PRC § 21080.21) – Expanded by AB 2564 (2012), this code provided a temporary exemption for pipeline projects that were less than a mile away from a right-of-way location.

5. Rooftop and Parking Lot Solar (PRC § 21080.35) – Created by SB 266 (2012) this code provided an exemption for existing solar energy system installation on existing rooftops or existing parking lots

Top 5 Applied Housing Exemptions



Only exemptions legislated 2010-2025 were included in this analysis.
Data source: CEQAnet Database, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.

To address California's housing shortage and rising costs, the Legislature created many CEQA exemptions to accelerate housing development. These exemptions broaden definitions, reduce strict criteria, and expand existing provisions to support quicker implementation of mixed-use, in-fill, and higher density development. The following section presents the five most applied housing exemptions and analyzes 2010–2025 Notice of Exemption filing trends.

1. Multifamily Residential (PRC § 21159.25) – Certain multifamily residential and mixed-use multifamily residential projects are exempt from CEQA. Among other requirements, projects must be consistent with general plan, zoning, and regulations; meet density thresholds; no more than 5 acres; at least 75% surrounded by urban uses.

2. Additional Dwelling Ordinances (PRC § 21080.17) –
Last amended by AB 3057 (2024), this statute exempts from CEQA the adoption of an ordinance by a city or county to regulate or allow secondary units, accessory units, or junior accessory units in single-family residential zones.

3. Mixed-Use Residential (PRC § 21159.24) – Amended by SB 674 (2015), this statute exempts from CEQA certain higher density mixed-use residential infill projects in urban areas when a community-level environmental review has been recently completed.

4. City and Urban Housing (PRC § 21080.66) – Created by AB 130 (2025) this statute exempts CEQA housing projects that are within cities or urban areas, are less than 20 acres or in some instances less than 4 acres, and adhere to applicable general plans and zoning ordinances, among other detailed conditions. Tribal consultation, environmental assessment, and labor standards apply.

5. Accessory Units (GOV § 65852.2) –
This statute allows local governments to regulate accessory dwelling units (ADU) and requires that ADU undergo a ministerial approval process, making ADUs ministerially exempt from CEQA. This statute no longer exists.

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