

Assemblyman Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) and I had an [op-ed](#) published in yesterday’s San Francisco Chronicle that outlined steps to remove the barriers to more sustainable development. The op-ed is based on findings from [the report](#) that the environmental law programs at UCLA and UC Berkeley and the California Attorney General’s Office released last week, entitled “Removing the Roadblocks: How to Make Sustainable Development Happen Now.” I blogged about it [here](#).

Interesting to note [some of the comments](#) on the Chronicle website that interpret our argument as advocating more state-centered control of local land use. In fact, the point of this effort is to remove local government policies that prevent the market from responding to increased demand for walkable neighborhoods. California’s long-established environmental laws will not allow for the libertarian paradise that some may crave when it comes to land use policies (and what city wants to [end up like Houston](#) anyway?). But the alternative here is to streamline the planning process and environmental review and allow for more flexibility in the law. The irony of these conservative critiques is that some of the biggest philosophy-shifts will have to come from environmentalists. Groups like the Sierra Club have for many years fought to oppose new development that in many cases we now need to fight climate change and preserve open space. Fortunately, a consensus has been emerging in the last few years among downtown businesses and environmental groups, among others, that mixed use, walkable communities are the only way out of many of our biggest environmental and social problems.