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Schwarzenegger signs smart-zoning bill

By: Associated Press

SACRAMENTO -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed one of his first pieces of growth-management legislation Thursday, approving less restrictive zoning for cities trying to build neighborhoods that mix businesses and residences.

Schwarzenegger signed a bill to place alternative "form-based zoning" into state statutes that regulate how California develops.

Advocates say the zoning approach provided by the bill is more flexible for mixing stores, offices and housing into Main Street and neighborhood patterns prevalent before World War II. Most current zoning requires strict separation of different types of buildings, making popular older neighborhood styles difficult to re-create in new ones.

Last year, Petaluma, Calif. became the nation's first city to use form-based codes. The city is using them to guide redevelopment of 400 acres near its downtown.

Other California cities trying it include Azusa, Grass Valley, Hercules, Palo Alto, Sonoma and Ventura.

Assemblywoman Pat Wiggins, D-Santa Rosa, who chairs the Legislature's Smart Growth Caucus, introduced the bill.