



Peninsula Community Planning Board
1220 Rosecrans Street PMB 549
San Diego, CA 92106
pcpsd@gmail.com

April 3, 2026

Senator Akilah Weber Pierson
California State Senate, 39th District

Members of the California State Senate

RE: OPPOSITION – SB 958 (Weber Pierson): CEQA Exemption for Midway Rising Specific Plan

Dear Senator Weber Pierson and Distinguished Members of the California State Senate,

On behalf of the Peninsula Community Planning Board (PCPB), the duly appointed advisory body to the City of San Diego for the communities of Point Loma, Ocean Beach, and the Midway District, I write in strong opposition to SB 958. This bill would exempt the Midway Rising Specific Plan from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), eliminating a critical layer of public accountability for one of the largest and most consequential development projects in San Diego's history. We respectfully urge the Legislature to reject this legislation.

The SEIR Itself Identifies Significant, Unmitigated Impacts

The PCPB submitted detailed comments in May 2025 on the Midway Rising Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR PRJ-1106734, SCH No. 2023120451) — the same document SB 958 asks the Legislature to treat as final and sufficient. That SEIR openly identifies at least four impact areas as significant and unmitigated: land use, transportation, historic resources, and noise. These are not technical deficiencies that can be papered over by legislative declaration. They represent real, lasting harms to the residents of our communities that the project, as designed, cannot mitigate away.

SB 958 would strip the public of the ability to challenge these admitted deficiencies in court or through administrative process. Exempting a project from CEQA does not eliminate the environmental impacts — it simply eliminates accountability for them.

Traffic and Transportation: A Community Already at Capacity

The Sports Arena Boulevard–Rosecrans corridor is already one of the most congested roadways in San Diego, routinely operating at Level of Service E and F during peak hours. The Midway Rising project, as analyzed in the SEIR, would add an estimated

839,145 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per year attributable to the new entertainment center alone, with an additional 94 million VMT from proposed commercial development. The project proposes to increase arena capacity from 10,500 to 19,500 spectators and to host an estimated 158 events annually — meaning unmitigated traffic congestion for over 40 percent of the year.

The proposed mitigations — a 10-year shuttle to Old Town Transit Center and an employee transit subsidy — are speculative, time-limited, and do not reduce impacts to below significance even by the SEIR's own admission. The Greenwood Street extension, a critical mobility improvement identified in the Community Plan, was quietly eliminated through a plan amendment with no corresponding mitigation analysis. By removing CEQA review, SB 958 would permanently foreclose public recourse to challenge these failures.

Noise Impacts Acknowledged as Significant and Unavoidable

The SEIR explicitly concludes that noise levels during outdoor arena events will exceed City standards and are significant and unavoidable. The Legislature is now being asked to bless a project that the City's own environmental review concedes will chronically violate its noise ordinances. Point Loma, Midway, and Ocean Beach residents would bear this burden indefinitely, with no legal remedy once a CEQA exemption is in place.

Broken Commitments on Affordable Housing and Public Benefits

SB 958's legislative findings paint an optimistic picture of 2,000 affordable units, 21,900 construction jobs, and transformational community benefits. The record tells a more complicated story. Since the narrow passage of Measure C and the selection of the Midway Rising development team, the project has walked back its commitment to middle-income housing, reduced parks, and open space, and eliminated the Greenwood Street extension. The City has had to explore creating an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District to subsidize infrastructure costs, raising serious questions about whether the full 2,000 affordable units will ever be delivered — or whether the arena and market-rate housing will be built while the affordability promises are deferred or reduced.

CEQA review, while not a tool for economic analysis, provides a public forum to scrutinize phasing commitments, project alternatives, and whether approvals are appropriately conditioned. Eliminating that process eliminates the community's most reliable check on developer promises.

Hazardous Materials, Site Contamination, and Public Safety

The Sports Arena site is listed on the state's hazardous waste sites registry under Government Code §65962.5. Demolition of a 1960s-era arena will disturb asbestos, lead-based paint, and potentially contaminated soil. The SEIR's treatment of remediation is insufficiently detailed. Granting a blanket CEQA exemption before contamination risks are fully disclosed and mitigated is inconsistent with the Legislature's own environmental protection mandates.

A Dangerous Precedent for Project-Specific CEQA Exemptions

Perhaps the most consequential harm of SB 958 is not what it does to the Midway Rising project specifically, but what it invites statewide. This bill would establish a legislative template for bypassing CEQA through project-specific exemptions — a tool that well-resourced developers and industries will not hesitate to use again.

Consider the wave of large-scale data center development currently sweeping California. These facilities — often spanning hundreds of acres — generate substantial and well-documented environmental impacts: enormous water consumption for cooling systems, significant diesel generator emissions during outages and testing, major transmission infrastructure requirements, and intense pressure on already-strained electrical grids. Many are proposed near residential communities or in regions with existing air quality or water supply constraints. Under current law, CEQA requires that these impacts be disclosed, analyzed, and mitigated before approvals are granted. Local communities have standing to participate and, if necessary, to challenge inadequate review.

If SB 958 becomes law, the next data center developer — or the next large warehouse complex, the next industrial facility, the next controversial mixed-use project anywhere in the state — will arrive in Sacramento with a comparable argument: our project is of statewide economic importance, an EIR has already been completed, further review would only delay job creation. The Legislature will have already demonstrated its willingness to accept that logic. The Midway Rising exemption will be Exhibit A in every future lobbyist's brief.

CEQA's categorical and statutory exemptions already provide a principled, transparent mechanism for streamlining review of projects with demonstrated low impact. What SB 958 proposes is something categorically different: a one-off political carve-out for a single named project that its own environmental review found to have significant, unmitigated impacts. Legislating away accountability for a project of this kind does not streamline environmental review — it weaponizes the legislative process against it. The communities that will bear the consequences of this and future projects deserve better.

CEQA Is the Right Process — Not an Obstacle to Remove

The PCPB is not opposed to the redevelopment of the Midway site or to the creation of affordable housing. We support smart, responsible growth that genuinely serves our communities. What we oppose is a legislative shortcut that tells our residents: your concerns about traffic, noise, contamination, and broken promises are no longer legally cognizable — the project will proceed regardless.

CEQA exists precisely for projects of this scale and complexity. The fact that the SEIR already identifies four categories of significant, unmitigated impacts is not an argument for eliminating review — it is the argument for preserving it. We urge the Legislature to allow the CEQA process to proceed, require the City to genuinely address the deficiencies identified, and hold the Midway Rising team accountable to the commitments that earned public support.

The Peninsula Community Planning Board respectfully and unanimously opposes SB 958 and urges its defeat.

Sincerely,

Eric Law

Chair, Peninsula Community Planning Board

*cc: Assemblymember Tasha Boehner
Councilmember Jennifer Campbell, District 2
Midway-Pacific Highway Community Planning Group
City of San Diego Planning Department*