

Communication from Public

Name: Citizens Preserving Venice

Date Submitted: 04/12/2025 12:15 AM

Council File No: 25-0002-S19

Comments for Public Posting: Opposition to SB 79 This legislation is a classic case of distant forces of government making local decisions without the benefit of any engagement. It replaces local planning with an edict from hundreds of miles away. Is that really a smart approach? Before even delving into the bill itself, it's important to ask for the evidence that such upzoning actually succeeds in increasing the state's housing stock. Sen. Wiener has been pushing through bills for years that are premised on a supposition that the failure to produce adequate housing is due to environmental protections and zoning limitations. If true, there should be supportive data by now. We see the effects of increased gentrification and displacement following these reforms of his, but where's the evidence that they're effective in increasing housing stock? Sen. Wiener keeps telling you he has solutions, but every time the State Legislature passes one, he comes back and tells you it's not enough. Is it possible that these solutions are doing little or nothing to solve the housing problem, and especially at the low end of the ladder? Can you point to a city where this is working? Has any analysis determined the degree of success or failure of any earlier legislation that took a similar approach, i.e. programmatic removal or relaxation of planning controls? On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that upzoning drives up land values and promotes gentrification of low-income neighborhoods. Nothing in the bill incentivizes affordable housing, yet the mandated upzoning raises property values and is sure to disrupt low-income neighborhoods and displace their residents as gentrification takes hold. We have seen this dynamic time and again in Los Angeles. Other concerns: • In some areas, upzoning would be confined to individual transit corridors, but in other areas with denser transit grids, large expanses of land would be upzoned, with no consideration of other aspects of land use. Will cities then have to condemn land valued for large-scale buildings, in order to provide parks, schools, hospitals, libraries, and recreation facilities and other infrastructure? • Bus stops are inadequate anchors for increased density, since bus routes are often changed. This law could easily turn bus lines into instruments of speculation with great potential for manipulating property values. At best, the transit agency becomes an accidental City Planner with final say over where development goes. • If the

Legislature is serious about the importance of mutual benefits of affordable housing and transit, you should assure that the transit is permanent, either by restricting the upzoning to rail stops or by requiring municipal / transit agency legal commitments to retain the level of bus transit service at bus stops radius for at least 50 years • This bill also throws a huge curveball at City Planning Departments, affecting many other aspects of planning, and will require tremendous efforts by planners to adapt existing plans (and records) to this new reality. That would be a major, uncompensated burden. Will the State underwrite those tasks, or will cities be left to pay for this state mandate? • If whole neighborhoods and communities densify as envisioned, will the State ensure there is sufficient infrastructure to support it, including transportation? Or will cities have to fend for themselves? • This bill, if implemented, will incentivize residents of single-family and other low-rise neighborhoods to fight against transit, instead of embracing it. Please say no to Senate Bill 79.

Opposition to SB 79

This legislation is a classic case of distant forces of government making local decisions without the benefit of any engagement. It replaces local planning with an edict from hundreds of miles away. Is that really a smart approach?

Before even delving into the bill itself, it's important to ask for the evidence that such upzoning actually succeeds in increasing the state's housing stock. Sen. Wiener has been pushing through bills for years that are premised on a supposition that the failure to produce adequate housing is due to environmental protections and zoning limitations. If true, there should be supportive data by now.

We see the effects of increased gentrification and displacement following these reforms of his, but where's the evidence that they're effective in increasing housing stock?

Sen. Wiener keeps telling you he has solutions, but every time the State Legislature passes one, he comes back and tells you it's not enough. Is it possible that these solutions are doing little or nothing to solve the housing problem, and especially at the low end of the ladder? Can you point to a city where this is working?

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Nothing in the bill incentivizes affordable housing, yet the mandated upzoning raises property values and is sure to disrupt low-income neighborhoods and displace their residents as gentrification takes hold. We have seen this dynamic time and again in Los Angeles.

Other concerns:

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- If the Legislature is serious about the importance of mutual benefits of affordable housing and transit, you should assure that the transit is permanent, either by restricting the upzoning to rail stops or by requiring municipal / transit agency legal commitments to retain the level of bus transit service at bus stops radius for at least 50 years
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- If whole neighborhoods and communities densify as envisioned, will the State ensure there is sufficient infrastructure to support it, including transportation? Or will cities have to fend for themselves?
- This bill, if implemented, will incentivize residents of single-family and other low-rise neighborhoods to fight against transit, instead of embracing it.

Please say no to Senate Bill 79.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David S. Ewing', written in a cursive style.

David S. Ewing,
on behalf of Citizens Preserving Venice