

Communication from Public

Name:

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Comments for Public Posting: I am submitting this comment in response to recent public communications urging decisive SB 79 upzoning west of Bundy Drive in Sawtelle. Before relying on forward-looking descriptions of cohesive, walkable, community-oriented multifamily districts, it is important to examine what is actually being built under existing planning and incentive frameworks. While community plans such as the Expo Line Transit Neighborhood Plan articulate aspirational goals, those goals are not legally enforceable under SB 79. Two projects are particularly instructive. The Carmel Partners multifamily development south of the Expo/Bundy station (Case No. DIR-2021-10047-TOC-VHCA) was approved within a transit-adjacent context explicitly associated with walkability and neighborhood integration. In practice, the project is largely inward-facing, with internally oriented amenities and limited contribution to the surrounding public realm. Similarly, the former redevelopment approved under Case No. CPC-2007-1486-GPA-ZC-CU-DB-SPR - now the Riot Games campus - was justified through planning narratives emphasizing pedestrian activity and neighborhood-serving uses, yet resulted in a secured, inward-oriented campus with minimal street-level activation. These outcomes are not anomalous; they reflect what occurs when aspirational planning language is not paired with legally enforceable design, permeability, or community-integration requirements. SB 79 does not impose such requirements. It authorizes parcel-by-parcel, by-right upzoning without mandating public-facing design, coordinated infrastructure, or cohesive neighborhood form. For that reason, historical built outcomes in Sawtelle provide a more reliable basis for impact assessment than reliance on nonbinding planning visions alone. Several assertions in the referenced comment warrant clarification. First, the claim that “many parcels house only one or two residents” is not supported by any parcel-level public data. Household size is not tracked at the parcel level, fluctuates over time, and is not a criterion used by SB 79, which bases eligibility on transit proximity rather than occupancy. Planning policy should avoid speculative judgments about how many people “should” live in a given home, particularly when those homes represent long-standing family residences built and maintained in compliance with existing law. Second,

characterizing housing west of Bundy as “antiquated” and “built under long-obsolete safety and seismic codes” conflates construction era with present-day compliance. Single-family homes in Los Angeles are not required to be retroactively rebuilt to current codes solely due to age, nor does sale trigger mandatory seismic upgrades. These homes are legal, habitable, and have typically undergone incremental, permitted improvements over decades. SB 79 does not authorize qualitative judgments about housing legitimacy based on age of construction. Third, describing residents as “trapped in place” assigns a negative value judgment to housing stability that many long-term homeowners - particularly seniors on fixed incomes - do not share. SB 79 does not frame residential stability as a problem, nor does it promise “carefully planned redevelopment.” It authorizes by-right upzoning regardless of on-the-ground conditions. Conflating by-right upzoning with coordinated planning overstates both the statute’s intent and its safeguards. Finally, the comment advocates for comprehensive district planning with coordinated infrastructure, traffic management, and service delivery. SB 79 does not provide for this. It enables parcel-by-parcel redevelopment at the discretion of individual property owners, without requiring area plans, infrastructure sequencing, or design coherence. Invoking the benefits of comprehensive planning to justify SB 79 mischaracterizes how the statute actually operates. Concerns regarding SB 79 implementation west of Bundy Drive are grounded not in abstract opposition to housing, but in publicly available historical records showing how density has been distributed in Sawtelle over time and how planning promises have translated into built outcomes. Reliance on non-legally enforceable visions to evaluate legislation is not a defensible substitute for examining empirical results.