

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: I am writing in response to recent comments urging the City to further concentrate density in Sawtelle, particularly in the remaining single-family pocket at the southwest edge of the Expo/Bundy Station half-mile radius. If housing policy is going to be evaluated through the lens of “exclusion,” then the historical and demographic reality of Sawtelle must be acknowledged. Sawtelle west of Bundy exists precisely because of exclusionary land-use practices that pushed Japanese and Latino families into this area. Their children and grandchildren remain here today. Sawtelle absorbed density on behalf of CD11 because housing was historically shifted into “lower-income communities with fewer protections and fewer resources” — which Sawtelle was. Today, only about 5% of historically redlined Sawtelle remains single-family, concentrated west of Bundy. The other 95% has already carried the district’s density burden for decades. Sawtelle is now treated as a planning paradox: created by exclusionary policies, and now itself labeled exclusionary. It is simultaneously described as having absorbed its fair share of growth and as having absorbed too little. If exclusionary outcomes are the standard by which housing policy is judged, then SB 79’s densification model itself deserves scrutiny. The housing types projected under SB 79 and related state density-bonus frameworks are overwhelmingly studios and one-bedroom units. Financial feasibility models for multifamily development in Coastal Los Angeles, prepared for the County of Los Angeles by Keyser Marston Associates, show a typical unit mix of roughly 21% studios, 44% one-bedrooms, and 35% two-bedrooms — with effectively zero three- or four-bedroom units. Meanwhile, the existing housing stock west of Bundy currently supports families with children and, in many cases, multigenerational households. This outcome is not accidental. Analysis by the Turner Center shows that developers using density-bonus programs strongly favor Extremely Low Income (ELI) units because they require the lowest set-aside percentage — roughly 8–11% — to unlock substantial density bonuses. This structure incentivizes maximizing unit counts rather than unit size, producing buildings optimized for singles and couples rather than families. At the same time, the frequently invoked “15-minute city” framework — promising livability for families and young professionals alike —

is acknowledged by SCAG itself to be aspirational rather than operational. SCAG's Connect SoCal equity analysis finds that only 0.02% of regional destinations — jobs, schools, healthcare, and retail — are currently accessible within a one-mile walk, and transit access within 15 minutes is described as “near zero.” In other words, the 15-minute city is not an enforceable planning reality. It is a long-term aspiration that depends entirely on local adoption, infrastructure investment, and public-realm coordination — none of which are embedded in SB 79's by-right upzoning framework, and none of which history suggests will be delivered by market forces alone. Layered on top of this, LAUSD enrollment has declined by approximately 44% since its peak in 2003. Families are increasingly pushed to the Inland Empire and other peripheral regions, where larger units are available but long car commutes are unavoidable — directly contradicting the climate and mobility goals that SB 79 is meant to advance. The result is a form of functional exclusion: families are being priced and zoned out of transit- and amenity-rich neighborhoods and implicitly told that proximity to jobs, schools, and rail is meant for child-free professionals. In effect, current densification policy accepts — and accelerates — the disappearance of families from the urban core. Even if filtering may eventually improve affordability for family-sized units, that is a 20–50 year time horizon. In real time, today's model of densification is exclusionary of families with children, just as earlier zoning regimes were exclusionary of other demographics. If exclusion is the concern, then it must be applied consistently — not selectively. Protecting the last remaining single-family homes in historically redlined Sawtelle is not a defense of privilege. It is an acknowledgment that this community has already absorbed generations of growth, displacement pressure, and density on behalf of the Westside, and that today's housing framework is producing a city that is increasingly exclusionary for families.