

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 25-1083

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing to oppose the provision within the proposed SB 79 Implementation Ordinance (the Low-Rise Ordinance) that would reduce required side and rear yard setbacks. While we recognize the City's obligation to comply with state law, reducing rear and side yard setbacks to four feet is neither required nor necessary to achieve SB 79's housing density. Available studies indicate that maintaining 15-foot rear yard setbacks would not preclude achieving SB 79's development objectives. These recommended reductions maximize lot coverage at the expense of basic protections. The Planning Department's responsibility is to safeguard public well-being and neighborhood stability—not to facilitate development patterns that undermine them. Reducing setbacks to four feet would have several serious impacts:

- Fire safety: In a city where wind-driven fires are always a possibility, it is unconscionable that a four-foot rear and side setback are being recommended. Four-foot separations limit defensible space between structures, increasing the risk of fire spread and constrains the emergency access for firefighting equipment.
- Urban tree canopy and environmental health: Approximately 90% of the City's tree canopy exists on private property. Meaningful tree planting and retention are not feasible within four-foot setbacks which due to "exiting" criteria must be paved. The size of the building and the hardscape around it will contribute to the urban heat island effect, resulting in higher temperatures.
- Private open space and quality of life: In a climate that supports year-round outdoor living, reducing adjacent apartment house setbacks will unnecessarily diminish quality of life for all residents. These are not abstract planning considerations; they directly affect how residents live day to day. While we appreciate the proposal to maintain 15-foot front yard setbacks, this does not address the areas of greatest impact. Front yards already benefit from the buffer of streets and sidewalks. The most significant points of interface between new development and existing homes occur along rear and side property lines—precisely where the greatest reductions are proposed. These reduced setbacks are inconsistent with existing Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) standards, which require a 15-foot rear yard and five-foot side yards in multi-family zones such as RD1.5, R3, and R4. The department's reliance on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

standards to justify 4 ft setbacks is misplaced. ADUs are intended as small, secondary units-not multi-family buildings with substantially greater occupancy, intensity, and risk. We also wish to express concern regarding the lack of direct public notification to affected property owners and residents. This absence of transparency undermines public trust in the planning process. The City must notify by mail all residents and property owners of this major change in land use. In addition, we request this SB 79 implementation ordinance be expressly tied to, and automatically updated to reflect, any future revisions to, postponement of, or repeal of SB 79.