

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 25-1083

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing as a Sawtelle resident to urge the City to carefully evaluate how SB 79 would apply to the remaining R1 single-family residential blocks west of Bundy Drive. Sawtelle is already one of the most densely developed neighborhoods in Council District 11, supporting a wide range of housing types: large multifamily buildings, mixed-use developments, transit-adjacent apartments, and recent high-density projects such as West Edge and the Carmel Partners development south of the Expo Line. This diversity reflects decades of planning decisions that have consistently placed new housing in Sawtelle while much of the rest of CD 11 has remained extremely low density. Sawtelle was historically redlined, and over time it has absorbed a disproportionate share of residential density, infrastructure, and corridor-adjacent development. Treating Sawtelle as simply another “Higher Opportunity Area” without acknowledging that cumulative burden risks repeating long-standing inequities in how growth is distributed across the district. Recent public comments on this Council File describe West LA as “under built” and cite its “Highest Resource” designation as justification for aggressive upzoning. But that designation is based on a composite of factors, including job proximity, school quality, and regional income, and was designed to help guide affordable housing investment, not to function as a zoning mandate. Its application is opaque, and it produces counterintuitive results, such as Sawtelle being classified as higher-resource than adjacent, far lower-density areas. If the City wishes to rely on these designations in implementing SB 79, intellectual honesty would suggest pairing them with a present-day residential density overlay, so policymakers and the public can clearly see where housing has already been concentrated, where it has not, and where it will go. Sawtelle already demonstrates that mixed housing can and does work. But the remaining R1 blocks west of Bundy represent some of the most vulnerable housing stock under SB 79: single-family parcels that are comparatively easy to acquire and redevelop, even as nearby R2 and multifamily areas are buffered by tenant protections and existing households. From a practical standpoint, these R1 blocks are the lowest-hanging fruit for redevelopment, even though their loss would have an outsized impact on neighborhood stability. As M. Nolan Gray, Senior Director of

Legislation and Research at California YIMBY, has written, zoning has often “off-loaded its costs onto less privileged residents,” concentrating density along corridors and in communities that have already borne the brunt of growth, while more insulated neighborhoods remain untouched. SB 79 risks reinforcing that pattern unless implementation is sensitive to cumulative impact and local context. Finally, I want to address a common refrain directed at affected homeowners: that upzoning is acceptable because property values may rise. This framing treats homes purely as speculative assets and ignores that, for most residents, a home represents community, continuity, and family stability. It is also inconsistent with the broader argument that housing should be treated as a social good rather than an investment. I respectfully ask the Council to ensure that SB 79 implementation in Sawtelle, particularly west of Bundy Drive, accounts for existing density, historical burden, and neighborhood context, and that alternative implementation approaches be evaluated before irreversible changes are made.