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May 15, 2025

**Submitted electronically**

Senator Laura Richardson  
1021 O St., Suite #7340  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Oppose Unless Amended SB 79 (Wiener) – Abundant & Affordable Housing Near Transit Act**

Dear Senator Richardson,

The Los Angeles Conservancy writes to express our opposition to SB 79 (Wiener), which would disregard state-certified housing elements and bestow land use authority to transit agencies and developers with loose requirements for onsite affordable housing. This bill undermines the very planning tools designed to support housing production and protect community resources.

SB 79 doubles down on the recent trend of the state overriding its own mandated local housing elements. This latest overreaching effort forces cities to approve transit-oriented development projects near specified transit stops—**up to seven stories high and 120 homes per acre**—without regard to community needs, environmental review, or public input. Most alarmingly, it allows transit agencies unlimited land use authority on property they own or control, regardless of distance from a transit stop. Agencies would control all aspects of development—including height, density, and design—without regard to local zoning or adopted plans.

This sweeping preemption not only disempowers local governments and communities but directly threatens California's historic and cultural resources. Los Angeles believes in the value of historic places and neighborhoods – a belief that is reinforced by policy that seek to protect historic assets and ensure compatible new development. SB 79 would be



particularly devastating to low-income and multi-family neighborhoods. These marginalized communities, including many throughout South L.A., are already facing intense development pressure leading to displacement and erasure of cultural identity. SB 79 would remove all remaining guardrails that these communities helped create, especially those to commemorate and honor their collective history.

In just the last two years, Los Angeles County Planning and Los Angeles City Planning have expanded housing opportunities through multiple planning initiatives including:

- Florence-Firestone Transit Oriented District Specific Plan (FFTODSP), implemented 2023
- Connect Southwest LA: A TOD Specific Plan for West Athens-Westmont, adopted 2019 and updated 2024
- LA County's Metro Area Plan, implemented 2024
- Willowbrook Transit Oriented District Specific Plan, implemented 2024
- Citywide Housing Incentive Program (CHIP) ordinance, implemented 2025, which includes the Affordable Housing Incentive Program (AHIP)
- South Bay Area Plan, implemented 2025
- West Carson Transit Oriented District Transit Oriented District Specific Plan, Adopted 2019 and updated 2025
- The Citywide Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO), adopted by LA City Council in 2024, to be implemented in 2025
- Harbor LA Community Plans Update, currently in draft form

Collectively, these planning efforts plan for tens of thousands of new housing units and tens of thousands of jobs Senate District 35. In most cases, the most intense development is focused in areas adjacent to transit and on commercial corridors. Much of the burden for adding new housing has already been placed on communities in South Los Angeles, and this bill proposes additional density.

Unlike SB 79, each of these plans went through robust community engagement processes, where diverse community voices were present. Planners had to balance the need for housing with community concerns about gentrification and displacement and the critical need for affordable housing, all while providing space for industrial and commercial growth that support good paying jobs to the local workforce. Planners designed protections for historic resources and legacy businesses and provided incentives to enhance community character.

We understand and share the goal of addressing California's housing shortage. However, as currently drafted, SB 79 will not deliver the housing needed in a manner that supports local



flexibility, community engagement, and preservation of historic places. California will not meet its housing goals through a purely state-driven, by-right model. SB 79 seriously undermines the community planning process and the needs of the constituents who participated in that process.

In the latest revision of SB-79, the bill's author provides greater flexibility for municipalities to provide alternative plans. This is a positive change, but we still feel many of the provisions in the aforementioned plans will still be overridden, including the protections for historic resources deemed important by local communities.

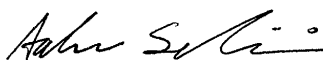
We assert that designated historic resources should be excluded in SB-79, using similar language adopted in previous state housing bills including 2021's Senate Bill 9 to ensure that "The development is not located within a historic district or property included on the State Historic Resources Inventory, as defined in Section 5020.1 of the Public Resources Code, or within a site that is designated or listed as a city or county landmark or historic property or district pursuant to a city or county ordinance."

There are few designated historic resources that would be affected by this bill in your district, but they deserve protection. Places like The Watts Happening Cultural Center (also known as the Mafundi Building), Watts Station, and the Fox Theater in Inglewood are all designated resources and listed on the National Register. Until protections for historic places like these are guaranteed in Senate Bill 79, the Conservancy asks for your opposition to this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

### **About the Los Angeles Conservancy:**

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with nearly 5,000 member households throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Sincerely,



Andrew Salimian  
Director of Advocacy

