

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Senator, California State Senate
1021 O St., Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: *SB 79 (Wiener) Transit-oriented Development
Notice of Opposition*

Dear Senator Wiener,

The City of Hawthorne writes to express our strong opposition to your SB 79 (Wiener), which would disregard state-certified housing elements and bestow land use authority to transit agencies without any requirement that developers build housing, let alone affordable housing.

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 a density of 120 homes per acre – without regard to the community’s needs, environmental review, or public input.

The City of Hawthorne is already densely built and a few years ago, was considered one of the highest densely built city in the country. The areas in the city that are within half mile of rail transit stops are developed with residential, commercial and industrial structures. Allowing a streamlined and ministerially approved high and dense residential developments would only create overcrowding and outrage from the nearby communities.

Most alarmingly, SB 79 defies cities’ general plans and provides transit agencies unlimited land use authority on property they own or have a permanent easement, regardless of the distance from a transit stop. Transit agencies would have the power to determine all aspects of the development including height, density and design, without any regard to local zoning or planning.

This broad new authority applies to both residential and commercial development. Transit agencies could develop 100% commercial projects – even at transit stops – and not provide a single new home, while simultaneously making the argument that more housing must be constructed around transit stops.

City of Hawthorne appreciates and respects your desire to pursue a housing production proposal. However, as currently drafted, SB 79 will not spur much-needed housing construction in a manner that support local flexibility, decision-making, and community input. State-driven ministerial or by-right housing approval processes fail to recognize the extensive public engagement associated with developing and adopting zoning ordinances and housing elements.

California will never produce the number of homes needed with an increasingly state-driven, by-right housing approval process. What we really need is a sustainable state investment that matches

the scale of this decades-in-the-making crisis. For these reasons, the City of Hawthorne strongly opposes SB 79.

Enclosed is a City of Hawthorne's Resolution No. 8519, which formally opposes SB 79.

Sincerely,

Alex Vargas,
Mayor, City of Hawthorne

Katrina Manning
Mayor Pro Tem

Angie Reyes English
Councilmember

Faye Johnson
Councilmember

Alex Monteiro
Councilmember

Encl.