



City of Culver City

Staff Report

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Item #: A-4.

CC - ACTION ITEM: Discussion and Direction on California State Senate Bill 79, The Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act.

Meeting Date: March 16, 2026

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Fiscal Impact: Yes No **General Fund:** Yes No

Attachments: Yes No

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (03/12/2026)

Department Approval: Mark E. Muenzer, Planning & Development Director, Interim Housing & Human Services Director, (03/04/2026)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council receive a report on California State Senate Bill 79, The Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act, and discuss and give direction as applicable.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 79 was signed by Governor Newsom on October 10, 2025 and will become effective on July 1, 2026. The bill, called the Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act, establishes new development standards for “transit-oriented housing developments” (“TODs”), which are residential projects on land zoned for commercial, residential, and mixed uses within specified distances of transit stops. These standards will supersede otherwise applicable standards and will allow increased heights and densities to encourage residential and mixed use development near transit stops. These new standards apply only to TODs with five or more units and a minimum 30 dwelling units per acre, while all other projects would be subject to existing zoning standards.

Eligible transit stops are divided into two tiers. Tier 1 includes heavy rail transit stations, such as those along the LA Metro B and D lines, and commuter rail stations with at least 72 trips per day. Tier 2 includes light rail, such as the LA Metro E line, commuter rail stations with at least 48 trips per day,

bus rapid transit stations, and bus stops that qualify as Major Transit Stops, and which also have 24-hour dedicated lanes and less-than-15-minute headways. Culver City has four Tier 2 locations and no Tier 1 locations. [Note: SB 677, currently working its way through the Legislative Committee process, would slightly change the definition of “high-frequency commuter rail” as it pertains to Tier 1 transit stops. It seems unlikely at this point that the proposed legislation will impact staff’s analysis of potential zoning changes in Culver City.]

Development Standards for a Tier 2 Transit Stop

| | Minimum Height Limit | Minimum Residential Density Limit (du/ac) | Minimum Achievable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) |
|---------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Within 200 ft | 85 feet | 140 du/ac | 4.0 FAR |
| Within ¼ mile | 65 feet | 100 du/ac | 3.0 FAR |
| Within ½ mile | 55 feet | 80 du/ac | 2.5 FAR |

The new standards will depend on how far from a transit stop the proposed TOD is located, using radii measured at 200 feet, ¼ mile, and ½ mile from the transit stop. The standards for height and residential density are the minimum limits that a jurisdiction can enforce. The standard for floor area ratio (FAR) limits a jurisdiction’s ability to enforce any other standards that would prevent a project from achieving that FAR. Cities may still enforce any standards they have regarding building design or inclusionary housing requirements as long as they do not prevent the project from achieving the height, density, or FAR set by the bill. Projects are also eligible for any applicable State and local density bonus incentives.

To be an eligible SB 79 development project, a project must include a minimum of five units, a minimum residential density of 30 du/ac, or the jurisdiction’s required minimum density, if higher, and have a maximum average unit size of 1,750 square feet.

Projects with more than 10 units are also subject to affordability requirements. The minimum provisions are at least 7% of units affordable to extremely low-income households, at least 10% of units affordable to very low-income households, or at least 13% of units affordable to lower-income households. Certain labor standards, such as prevailing wage requirements, also apply for projects over 85 feet in height.

The bill does not prescribe a ministerial review process, but many larger TODs under SB 79 may be eligible for ministerial review under SB 35/SB 423 if meeting the minimum requirements for those statutes, including providing certain percentages of unit affordability and paying prevailing wages for construction.

Locally designated historic properties identified before January 1, 2025, are eligible for delayed implementation of SB 79 until one year after the next Housing Element’s adoption, approximately 2030. Preliminary analysis has identified approximately 30 properties that may be eligible (e.g. Helms Bakery).

The bill also has several categories of exempt properties. Any land that is not zoned for residential, commercial, or mixed uses is exempt. In Culver City, these would include the Special Purpose zones:

Studio, Institutional, Open Space, Transportation, and Cemetery. Properties with more than two existing rent-controlled units, or where more than two rent-controlled units have been demolished within the previous seven years, are also not eligible for the bill’s standards. Staff is presently mapping out the locations of those exempt rent-controlled units.

Transit agencies are given the power to adopt zoning standards by resolution of the agency’s Board of Directors for projects on agency-owned property which is located within the radii. This option for transit agencies requires public hearings and outreach with local governments and communities, and has certain requirements for adjacency to a transit stop, and for how and when the land was acquired by the transit agency. The E Line tracks along National Boulevard and a portion of a former rail spur in the Hayden Tract are the only Metro-owned properties in the City, according to a Metro real estate map.

DISCUSSION

Based on staff analysis, and consistent with other cities’ analysis (Los Angeles, Beverly Hills), Culver City would potentially be affected by four eligible stops, all of which are Tier 2. These stops include the La Cienega/Jefferson and Culver City Metro E Line stations, east- and westbound bus stops at the intersection of Venice Boulevard and Overland Avenue, and a planned Bus Rapid Transit station at Venice Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard, identified in SCAG’s 2040 Regional Transportation Plan. Note that the final official SB 79 map is not yet complete. It will be prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), with input from HCD.

Development Standards for Culver City - Tier 2 Transit Stop

| | Minimum Height Limit | Minimum Residential Density Limit (du/ac) | Minimum Achievable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) |
|---------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Within 200 ft | 85 feet | 140 du/ac | 4.0 FAR |
| Within ¼ mile | 65 feet | 100 du/ac | 3.0 FAR |
| Within ½ mile | 55 feet | 80 du/ac | 2.5 FAR |

The table below outlines the development standards required at qualifying transit stops in Culver City.

The radii of the four potentially eligible stops cover the full spectrum of the City’s zoning designations and densities, from the low-density Single-Family and Two-Family zones through the highest-density Mixed Use High zone. The most significant differences in development standards between the City’s existing zones and SB 79 standards are in the lower-density residential zones, including height and density as well as uses. The table below illustrates the new residential development capacity allowed under SB 79.

Development Potential on a Typical 5,000 Square Foot R1 Lot

| Radius from Tier 2 Stop | Standard R1 Zoning | SB 79 Density |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Within ¼ mile | 1 unit + ADUs | 12 units + density bonus |
| Within ½ mile | 1 unit + ADUs | 10 units + density bonus |

The half-mile SB 79 radii from the Metro E Line stations also interact with the ongoing Hayden Tract Specific Plan project. The proposed Hayden Tract densities and heights are mostly higher than those required by SB 79, except for the properties adjacent to existing Rancho Higuera Neighborhood, which would be required to meet the SB 79 minimums.

The state provides several options for compliance with SB 79. These options can be implemented in concert with each other to allow different regulations around different stations.

- 1. **Take no action** - Implement the standards as written in the statute.
- 2. **Create minimum standards** - Create standards to regulate SB 79 developments.
- 3. **Half Implementation** - Allow 50% capacity to delay effectuation until 2030.
- 4. **TOD Alternative Plan** - Reallocate densities within the half mile of transit stops.

Any new ordinance or TOD Alternative Plan adopted to implement SB 79 needs to be reviewed by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) who will make a determination regarding its compliance with the statutes. HCD review time is up to 120 days (90 day standard review, plus a potential 30 day extension). After HCD provides comments, a city can either update their ordinance to address the comments or adopt findings justifying why the city believes its interpretation is correct.

Option 1: Take no action

If the City took no action, the SB 79 development standards would automatically apply to transit-oriented housing developments starting July 1, 2026. This option would allow the increased SB 79 height and density standards across all qualifying properties. In this option the City could either make no changes or adopt an ordinance incorporating SB 79 development standards as written effective July 1, 2026. Note this increase would apply to TOD housing projects only (five or more units, with minimum 30 du/ac), whereas all other projects would follow the existing zoning standards and requirements. In this option historic properties (e.g. Helms Bakery) would be immediately subject to SB 79 height and densities if they fall within the radii of a qualifying transit stop.

Option 1 can be implemented as to one or more transit locations in conjunction with any of the other listed options at the remaining locations.

Option 2: Create minimum standards

The City is authorized to adopt a local ordinance for TOD standards, as long as it is consistent with SB 79. This option would allow the increased SB 79 height and density across affected properties. In

addition, it would allow the City to add new supplemental development standards to address the permissible larger scale developments. The City would create new TOD regulations currently missing for the lower density zones (R1, R2, etc.). In addition to creating development standards, the City could also identify historic properties which defers SB 79 development requirements for designated properties until one year following the next housing element (2030 effective date, needs to be approved in 2029).

Note the local implementation ordinance would apply to TOD housing projects only, whereas all other projects would follow the existing zoning. Adopting a local implementing ordinance would require up to 120-day review by HCD. Option 2 can be implemented as to one or more transit stop locations in conjunction with any of the other listed options at the remaining locations.

Option 3: Half Implementation

This option would require the City to partially increase densities for TOD housing projects in order to defer the full SB 79 height and density standards until one year following the next housing element update (2030). The delayed effectuation can follow either of the processes outlined below.

- At a site level, delayed effectuation is available when sites meet any of the following:
 - Permit at least 50% the density and FAR, or
 - Contains a historic resource designated before January 1, 2025 on a local register

- At a TOD zone level, delayed effectuation is available when:
 - All sites in the TOD zone cumulatively allow for at least 75% of the aggregate density, and
 - 33% of the sites in a TOD zone currently allow at least 50% of the density and FAR

An ordinance to delay effectuation would require up to 120-day review by HCD. Option 3 can be implemented as to one or more transit stop locations in conjunction with any of the other listed options at the remaining locations.

Option 4: TOD Alternative Plan

This option requires the overall SB 79 increased housing development capacity citywide but allows a city to manage the allocation across TOD areas and sites. Below are the requirements for a TOD alternative plan at the site, station, and citywide level.

- At a citywide level, the plan must maintain the same total net zoned capacity for both total units and residential floor area across TOD stop areas as proposed by SB79. Net capacity must take into account the existing number of units and amount of developed floor area existing on a site.

- At a transit stop location level, the plan cannot reduce capacity of total units and residential floor area (as proposed by SB79) by more than 50%.

- At a site level, the plan cannot decrease density (of SB 79 levels) by more than 50% on any site (except under limited circumstances described further below) and any increase in density may only be counted up to 200%.

Adopting a TOD alternative plan would require up to 120-day review by HCD. Option 4 can be implemented as to one or more transit stop locations in conjunction with any of the other listed options at the remaining locations.

Standing Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee

Staff presented information on the four implementation options to the Standing Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee (Vice-Mayor Fish, Councilmember McMorris) at their special meeting on February 17, 2026. Livable Communities Initiative (LCI), a community organization, also presented a proposal for a TOD Alternative Plan to redistribute density closer to the major corridors and routes to transit stations.

After discussion, the subcommittee members came to a consensus to recommend pursuing Option 4: preparing and adopting a TOD Alternative Plan. The members expressed a preference for a proposal which would not increase density in the Hayden Tract, allowing the ongoing specific plan project to determine appropriate densities in that area. A TOD Alternative Plan would allow density to be redistributed along routes to transit stations rather than by distances ‘as-the-crow-flies’, as well as away from properties that are unlikely to provide new housing, such as those that have recently redeveloped.

Next Steps

If the full City Council directs staff to pursue the TOD Alternative Plan, staff estimates 6 to 12 months for development, depending on the scope of the plan. In this case, staff would recommend Option 2 and/or 3 (see above description in staff report) to take effect in the interim.

Many jurisdictions in California have advocated for the state to pass legislation to delay the upcoming July 1, 2026 implementation deadline. As of this report there is no pending legislation to delay implementation. SB 908 (Wiener) is in preliminary form and proposes to make technical and clarifying changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The discussion and direction on Senate Bill 79 are covered by the general exemption rule (as provided in California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061, subsection (b)(3)) that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) only applies to projects which have potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Senate Bill 79 provides an exemption from CEQA for any action that the City may take to implement it, including any changes to the Zoning Code, rezonings, or TOD Alternative Plans.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact associated with the discussion of Senate Bill 79.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2026-03-16_ATT1_Preliminary SB 79 Maps: Citywide, Downtown-East Washington Detail, Venice-Overland Detail, West Washington Detail

MOTION(S)

That the City Council:

Receive a report on California State Senate Bill 79, The Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act, and discuss and give direction as applicable.