



736 F Street
Arcata, CA 95521
April 15, 2025

City Manager
(707) 822-5953

Police
822-2428

Recreation
822-7091

Community Development
822-5955

Finance
822-5951

Transportation
822-3775

Environmental Services
Streets/Utilities
822-5957

Environmental Services
Community Services
822-8184

Engineering
& Building
825-2128

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 Arcata 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 has taken proactive steps to plan for high-density, infill development that allows a range of housing types with ministerial permitting. The City Council has shown leadership in addressing the statewide housing crisis locally. This work involved more than 150 meetings with the public to define locally how to meet the housing challenge. The plans are sound and adequate to exceed the need our community will face for the next 20 to 50 years. This law would undercut the work we have done with our community.

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.

Arcata 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 supports 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 Arcata strongly opposes SB 79.

Sincerely,



Alexandra Stillman
Mayor
City of Arcata

cc. Mike McGuire, State Senator, District 2
Chris Rogers, State Assemblymember, District 2
Sara Sanders, Regional Public Affairs Manager, sanders@calcities.org
League of California Cities, cityletters@calcities.org