CITY OF SAN MATEO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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SB 79 FAQs

1. What is SB 79?

Senate Bill (SB) 79, also known as the *Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act*, is a California law that became effective on July 1, 2026. The law addresses qualifying transit-oriented housing developments in residential, mixed-use, and commercial zoning districts located near certain types of transit stops. SB 79 is intended to increase the supply of housing, support the development of affordable homes, and reduce vehicle miles traveled by encouraging housing near transit, jobs, and services.

2. Does SB 79 apply to your property?

SB 79 applies to properties located within one-half mile of a pedestrian access point in a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Station. In San Mateo, this includes the City's three Caltrain stations (Downtown, Hayward Park and Hillsdale) and portions of the Burlingame Caltrain Station area that extend into the City. These areas are designated as **Tier 1 Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Areas** under State law.

To see if a property is located within an SB 79 area, please view the MTC Senate Bill: Map of Transit Oriented Development Stops, Access Points and Zones in the San Francisco Bay Area.

3. Which projects are eligible?

SB 79 projects must comply with all of the following requirements:

- Located within one-half mile of a qualifying Transit Oriented Development (TOD) stop and on a site designated for residential, mixed-use, and/or commercial development;
- Includes five or more housing units;
- Provides a minimum density of 30 dwelling units per acre. For mixed-use developments located in mixed-use districts, the project shall comply with the minimum density requirement established in San Mateo Municipal Code Section 27.02.230, which may be greater than the minimum density required under SB 79;
- Complies with SB 79 affordability requirements (see Government Code Section 65912.157(i)) and the City's Below Market Rate (BMR) Ordinance;
- Limits the average floor space of the proposed dwelling units to 1,750 net habitable square feet per unit;
- Complies with SB 79 labor standards (see Government Code Section 65912.157(k)) and tenant-protection rules (see Government Code Section 65912.157(h)).

The law does not apply to projects:

- On sites that require demolition of rent-controlled or price-controlled housing occupied within the previous seven years or be built on a site where more than two housing units were demolished within the previous seven years and any of those units were rent-controlled or price-controlled;
- On sites that do not permit residential uses, mixed-use, or commercial uses;
- That propose hotel uses.

4. What are the development standards?

Development standards vary based on a property's distance from a transit stop. Properties located closest to transit generally qualify for the highest residential densities and building heights. In addition, local jurisdictions cannot enforce any other local development standard, or combination of standards, that would preclude a project from achieving the floor area ratio (FAR) specified in the table below. Development intensity generally decreases as the distance from transit increases. To determine a property's distance from a transit stop, please view the MTC Senate Bill: Map of Transit Oriented Development Stops, Access Points and Zones in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Development Standards for SB 79 Projects

Site Location	Height Limit	Max Density (dwelling units per acre)	FAR (Floor Area Ratio)
Adjacent to TOD stop (within 200 feet of a pedestrian access point to stop)	95 Feet	160 du/ac	4.5
Within ¼-mile of TOD stop	75 Feet	120 du/ac	3.5
Between ¼-mile and ½-mile of TOD stop	65 Feet	100 du/ac	3

5. How will single family zoning districts be impacted?

Some single-family residential properties in San Mateo are located within SB 79 qualifying areas. Others may not be eligible for SB 79 development due to their location, site limitations, and eligibility requirements.

6. Can an applicant for a housing development project in a qualifying area choose to comply with local zoning requirements and procedures instead of SB 79?

Yes. An applicant for a housing development project is not required to utilize SB 79 provisions and standards and may instead choose to comply with the City's local ordinances, policies, and development standards. For example, an applicant may propose development of a single-family dwelling unit on a site located within ¼-mile of a station area if single-family residential uses are permitted under the City's local regulations.

7. What are SB 79's tenant protection measures?

SB 79 includes tenant protection measures to reduce displacement and preserve existing housing. SB 79 is not eligible on sites currently containing more than two units subject to rent or price control that have been occupied within the past seven years and that would be demolished by this project or within the past seven years, more than two rent- or price-controlled units were demolished. Projects using SB 79 must also comply with all local tenant protection requirements.

8. Can the City opt out of SB 79?

No. The City cannot opt out of SB 79 because it is State law. However, the City may exclude certain sites from SB 79 by adopting an Alternative Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan, provided the plan meets the applicable statutory requirements. In general, an Alternative TOD Plan must maintain equivalent overall housing capacity across all TOD areas. As a result, if certain sites are excluded, their housing capacity must be accommodated elsewhere within the TOD area. Due to the limitations imposed by Measure T, approved by the San Mato voters in 2024, adopting an Alternative TOD Plan to reallocate housing capacity to other areas is not feasible for the City without voter approval.

9. Is the City implementing SB 79 in the Zoning Code?

No. The City is not implementing SB 79 in the Zoning Code at this time. For projects that utilize SB 79, the State law's development standards apply and supersede any conflicting local zoning regulations.

10. How does SB 79 affect historic resources and historic districts?

SB 79 allows cities to exclude historic resources that were locally designated before January 1, 2025 from the law through the adoption of an Alternative TOD Plan. In addition, historic resources are not eligible for the SB 79 streamlined ministerial review process under Government Code Section 65912.159. Existing historic preservation requirements and environmental review processes would continue to apply to these resources.

11. Does the State Density Bonus Law apply to SB 79 projects?

Yes. SB 79 projects may utilize the State Density Bonus Law to seek additional housing density, concessions, and waivers. Cities are not required to grant additional height incentives beyond the limits established by SB 79 (as shown in the chart in #4, above), except for projects that provide one hundred percent affordable housing. The number of incentives available depends on the level of affordability provided by the project.

12. What is the application review process for SB 79 projects?

Applicants must submit applications in accordance with the City's Development Review Application Process, as outlined in the Planning Application Guide. Applicants may choose to process their project under the ministerial approval process pursuant to Government Code Section 65912.159 if the project meets eligibility requirements. Projects that do not seek ministerial approval will be reviewed in accordance with the City's development review process and the requirements of the California Housing Crisis Act (SB 330).

13. Does SB 79 eliminate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

No. SB 79 does not eliminate CEQA. However, most housing development projects that utilize SB 79 can be eligible for CEQA exemptions or streamlined CEQA review, provided they meet the applicable requirements. Projects that qualify for ministerial review are not subject to review under CEQA.

14. Will I get notified of SB 79 projects?

SB 79 projects must comply with the City's neighborhood meeting and noticing requirements. Depending on the project size, tenants, residents, and property owners located within 500 to 1,000 feet of an SB 79 project will be notified at the time of application submittal and prior to any decision or public hearing.

Community members may also sign up for City's Notify Me list to receive email updates about upcoming projects, public meetings, and other community information.

15. Where can I learn more?

Additional resources are available here:

- Senate Bill 79 Legislative Text
- SB 79 Information from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
    - SB 79 Advisory Clarifications on Definitions for Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- SB 79 Information from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).
    - SB 79 Bill Summary

For additional information or questions regarding SB 79, please contact the Planning Division at (650) 522-7212 or planning@cityofsanmateo.org.