



CC Regular Meeting AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Meeting: August 18, 2026
Title: Updates on State Housing Legislation and Local Affordable Housing Projects Authorized by State Law
Presented by: Chris Marcarello, City Manager
Angel Carrillo, Assistant City Manager
Brian K. Lee, Deputy City Manager/Director of Community Development
Recommendation: That the City Council:
1. Receive and file this report; and
2. Provide direction related to outreach measures to inform the community about pending local housing projects authorized by State law.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In California, most decisions related to land use policies and zoning have historically been reserved at the local level (cities and counties). This approach has allowed local agencies to tailor growth and land development with a community's specific needs, local demands and local stakeholder feedback. In recent years, the State legislature has produced sweeping reforms that have shifted some of this authority from local agencies to a Statewide framework that seeks to accelerate housing production and streamline project approvals regardless of fit to surrounding neighborhoods.

Locally, there are currently three (3) proposed affordable housing projects that seek to utilize State legislation to increase project densities/building heights and reduce typical parking requirements. These include the following projects/locations:

- State of California Property – 233 N. Second Avenue
Proposed project seeks to develop the 0.49-acre site with a 6-floor (~75'), 60-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be restricted to seniors meeting affordability requirements and include 30 on-site parking spaces.
- Covina Methodist Church Property – 437 W. San Bernardino Road
Proposed project seeks to develop the existing parking lot north of existing buildings with a 4-floor, 70-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be available to people meeting affordability requirements and include 8 parking spaces. All existing buildings onsite would remain.
- Affirmed Housing Property – 19516 E. Cypress Street (in Unincorporated LA County territory)
Proposed project seeks to develop the 1.00-acre site with a 6-floor, 94-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be available to people meeting affordability requirements and include 30 parking spaces.

With the City's limited to no discretionary authority regarding these projects, each project developer has opted to conduct little to no public outreach to help inform the community about their proposed project and potential impacts on the community. As such, it is recommended that the City Council consider authorizing a variety of public outreach measures that will help enhance public engagement and visibility for each proposed project.

DISCUSSION:

Recent State legislative reforms have sought to shift zoning and land use authority from local agencies to a Statewide framework to accelerate housing production and streamline project approvals. These reforms have largely impeded the ability of local agencies to enforce portions of their zoning and land use policies, including determining the type, size, and scope of development within city boundaries. As a result, affordable housing projects that comply with applicable State statutes are not subject to discretionary review/approval by the City of Covina, although such projects are still required to comply with the California Building Code and Fire Code.

In spring 2025, the City Council received an update on these Statewide reforms and created resources on the City's website (<https://covinaca.gov/our-community/state-housing-laws/>) to better inform the community. This webpage includes summaries of recent laws that preempt local control pertaining to residential housing and affordable housing. Also, during this time, the Council adopted Resolution CC 2025-19, opposing the proposed Saffron Covina Housing Development at 19516 E. Cypress Street in Unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Since this time, the State legislature has adopted additional reforms, including SB 79, which became effective on July 1, 2026, and seeks to spur higher density housing developments within a one-half mile radius of transit stops (like the Covina Metrolink Station). Development standards under SB 79 include allowed building heights of 65 feet, 100 dwelling units/acre and a floor/area ratio of 3.0. Further, per SB 79, projects directly adjacent to a qualifying transit stop may be eligible for an adjacency intensifier to increase building heights and densities. This is in comparison to development standards in the City's mixed use overlay zone, which provide for building heights up to 50 feet, dwelling units/acre up to 40 and a floor/area ratio up to 1.25.

In Covina, there are currently three (3) proposed affordable housing projects that seek to utilize State legislation to increase project densities, grow building heights and reduce parking requirements that would typically be needed.

- **State of California Property – 233 N. Second Avenue**

Located adjacent to City Hall and the Covina Library, the proposed project seeks to develop a 0.49-acre site with a 6-floor, 60-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be restricted to seniors meeting affordability requirements and include 30 on-site parking spaces.

Notably, the proposed development would exceed existing building heights by approximately 25 feet and provide approximately 25 fewer parking spaces than would have otherwise been required per the City's Town Center Specific Plan. Since the City does not have other structures greater than 3 stories and does not possess a ladder apparatus, it is unclear how the developer will provide emergency fire services to high building floors and accommodate parking for its deficit of approximately 25 resident/guest spaces.

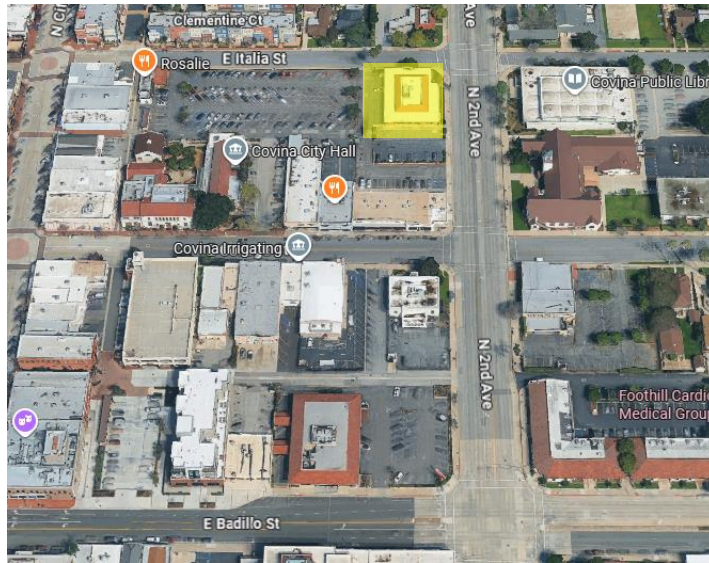
Existing Site



Proposed Rendering



Project Location



- **Covina Methodist Church Property – 437 W. San Bernardino Road**

Located north of the historic Adams Parks neighborhood, the proposed project seeks to develop the existing parking lot north of existing buildings with a 4-floor, 70-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be available to people meeting affordability requirements and include 8 parking spaces. All existing buildings onsite would remain.

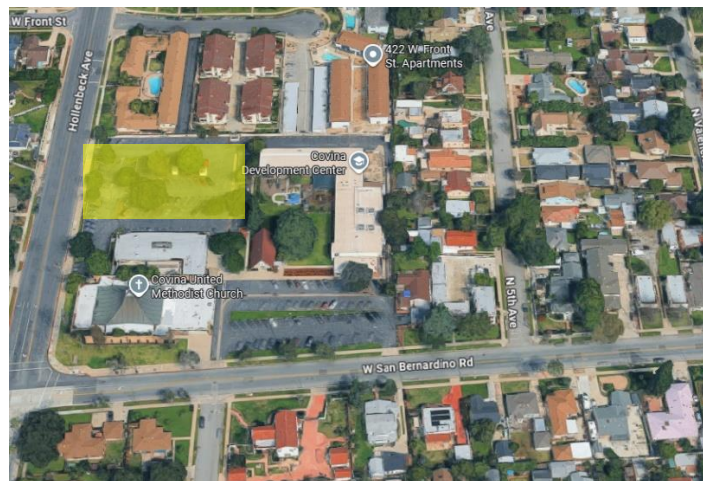
Existing Site



Proposed Rendering



Project Location



- **Affirmed Housing Property – 19516 E. Cypress Street (Unincorporated LA County territory)**

Located in Unincorporated County territory and just south of City residential neighborhoods, the proposed project seeks to develop the 1.00-acre site with a 6-floor, 94-unit multi-family apartment building. As proposed, all units would be available to people meeting affordability requirements and include 30 parking spaces.



Project Location



Lack of Outreach to the Community

To date, the project developers have conducted little to no outreach to engage local stakeholders and community members regarding their proposed projects. This approach contrasts with projects that proceed through the City's discretionary review process where notification/outreach is a required component of review.

As a result, the Council may consider authorizing City-initiated public outreach efforts to explain each proposed project's scope, the City's lack of discretionary authority and to help connect members of the public to appropriate project representatives. A summary of outreach efforts could include the following:

- **City Website:** Like the Council's direction in spring 2025, a webpage can be added on the City's homepage identifying each proposed project, providing project details (height, units, target population, parking etc.) and providing contact information for each project developer/property owner. See Attachment A for a draft webpage that has been developed.

- Direct Mailings: Project flyers can be distributed within a 1,000-foot radius of each proposed project location, explaining project details and contact information for each project developer/property owner. See Attachment B for a draft flyer that has been developed.
- Letter to CA Governor: A letter to the Governor and Director of Housing and Community Development has been prepared explaining that while the City is committed to supporting housing needs, there are significant challenges associated with using a ministerial, by-right approval process for larger scale housing projects. The letter further explains that this process has curtailed public outreach and has resulted in limited stakeholder input regarding projects that may significantly change local neighborhoods and impact property values.

As proposed, the City Council may consider these outreach efforts and any other alternatives to help inform and engage local stakeholders on these projects.

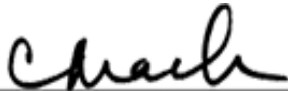
FISCAL IMPACT:

Nominal costs may be incurred for printing and postage, should the Council decide to pursue a direct mailing outreach approach.

CEQA (CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT):

Not applicable.

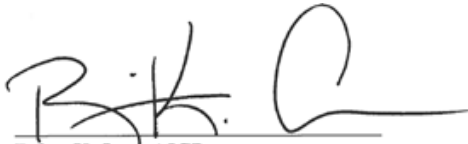
Respectfully submitted,



Chris Marcarello
City Manager



Angel Carrillo
Assistant City Manager



Brian K. Lee, AICP
Deputy City Manager/Director of Community Development

CITY OF COVINA | COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Proposed Housing Projects in and Around Covina

Learn about three proposed affordable housing developments, the California laws and governmental authorities that apply to them, and the City of Covina's role in each project.

Some housing projects proposed within or adjacent to Covina are not subject to the City's traditional discretionary approval process. This page is intended to clearly explain why.

Understanding the City's Role

California has enacted laws intended to increase and accelerate housing production throughout the state. Some of these laws limit the authority cities traditionally have had over local land-use decisions and require qualifying housing developments to be reviewed through streamlined or ministerial processes.

The City of Covina is committed to keeping residents informed about these projects, explaining the laws that apply to them, and clearly identifying the City's role in each project. Project information reflects proposals currently known to the City and may change as projects proceed through the development process.

What does "ministerial approval" mean?

Traditionally, some development projects are subject to **discretionary review**, which may involve public hearings before the Planning Commission or City Council and allow the City to exercise judgment when deciding whether to approve a project.

California law now requires certain qualifying housing projects to be reviewed **ministerially** or "by right." For these projects, review is generally limited to determining whether the project complies with applicable objective standards. If it does, the City may be legally required to approve it without the traditional discretionary public hearing process.

Projects within Covina remain subject to applicable building, fire, engineering, public-safety and other requirements that have not been preempted by state law.

Current Projects



CITY OF COVINA

**Covina United
Methodist Church
Affordable Housing**

437 W. San Bernardino Road

70

affordable units

4

floors

46 ft.

approx. height

8

proposed
parking spaces

Project details →



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**State Affordable Senior
Housing Project**

233 N. Second Avenue, near Italia
Street

60

affordable units

6

floors

75 ft.

approx. height

30

proposed
parking spaces

Project details →



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Saffron Covina

19516 E. Cypress Street, west of
Grand Avenue

94

affordable units

6

floors

County

land-use
authority

Outside

Covina city limits

Project details →

CITY OF COVINA

Covina United Methodist Church Affordable Housing Project

437 W. San Bernardino Road

The current proposal would construct a four-story affordable housing development on an existing surface parking area of the church property. Existing church and preschool buildings would remain.



Property owner	Covina United Methodist Church
Developer	Wakeland Housing
Status	Submitted to the City's Development Review Committee in July 2026
Units	70 affordable units (69 one-bedroom and 1 two-bedroom)
Height	Approximately 46 feet / 4 floors
Parking	8 proposed spaces

Why can this project be built here?

The applicant is seeking approval under several California housing laws, including **Senate Bill 4 (SB 4)**, the Affordable Housing on Faith and Higher Education Lands Act. SB 4 provides a streamlined, ministerial approval process for qualifying affordable housing developments on property owned by religious institutions and independent institutions of higher education.

The project is also being reviewed in connection with California's Density Bonus Law, SB 330 and AB 2097.

What authority does the City have?

The City is responsible for reviewing the application to determine whether it satisfies applicable state-law requirements and objective development standards. If the project qualifies under SB 4 and other applicable state housing laws, the City cannot require the traditional discretionary approval process that otherwise might apply.

Community outreach

As of July 2026, the City is not aware of a public community outreach meeting conducted by the applicant regarding the proposed development.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

State Affordable Senior Housing Project

233 N. Second Avenue, near Italia Street

The State proposes redevelopment of the existing surface parking lot/ building with a six-story affordable senior housing development.

Property owner	State of California
Developer	Lang Companies
Status	Temporary fencing and site preparation activity began in July 2026
Units	60 affordable units for qualifying low-income seniors
Height	Approximately 75 feet / 6 floors
Parking	30 proposed spaces



Why is the State developing this property?

The property is owned by the **State of California**. In 2019, Executive Order N-06-19 directed state agencies to identify excess state-owned property that could be used for affordable housing. The State subsequently expanded this effort through its Excess Sites Program.

The City is not the land-use decision-making authority for this project. Because the project is located on State-owned property and is proceeding under State authority, Covina does not have discretionary land-use authority to approve or deny the development.

Covina proposed an alternative site

The City Council and City staff engaged State representatives regarding a potential property exchange involving **176 E. Badillo Street**, the former Frontier site. The alternative property is approximately 800 feet from the Second Avenue property, roughly three times larger, and located in an area the City believes is more consistent with its long-term planning vision.

The City pursued discussions with State representatives and legislators and conducted due diligence related to acquiring the alternative property. The State ultimately declined the proposed exchange and elected to proceed at 233 N. Second Avenue.

What authority does the City have?

The City's involvement includes matters within its jurisdiction, such as work affecting City streets and the public right-of-way. The developer has obtained an encroachment permit from the City and paid applicable fees for work within the public right-of-way.

Community outreach

As of July 2026, the City is not aware of a public community outreach meeting conducted by the State or developer regarding the proposed development.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Saffron Covina

19516 E. Cypress Street, west of Grand Avenue

Important: Although the development is marketed as "Saffron Covina," the property is in **unincorporated Los Angeles County**, immediately adjacent to Covina. Land-use authority rests with the County of Los Angeles, not the City of Covina.



Developer	Affirmed Housing
Jurisdiction	Unincorporated Los Angeles County
Units	94 affordable units
Height	6-story development
Schedule	Developer project website indicates construction is anticipated to begin in December 2026

What authority does the City have?

Because the property is outside Covina's incorporated boundaries, the City of Covina does **not** have authority to approve, deny or impose land-use conditions on the project. Questions regarding land-use approvals, construction, environmental review or other development requirements should be directed to the County of Los Angeles or the project developer.

Community outreach

The City is aware of one virtual community workshop conducted by the developer on September 26, 2024.

Visit the developer's project website

Why doesn't the City Council vote on these projects?

These projects involve three different legal and jurisdictional circumstances. In each case, the City's traditional discretionary authority is limited or does not apply.

Methodist Church Project

Located in Covina, but proposed under state housing laws - including SB 4 - that can require streamlined ministerial review.

State Senior Housing

Located in Covina, but on State-owned land being developed under State authority. Covina is not the land-use approval authority.

Saffron Covina

Not located within Covina. The property is in unincorporated Los Angeles County and falls under County jurisdiction.

What is the City doing?

Even when state law limits the City's decision-making authority, Covina remains committed to representing the interests of its residents. The City will:

- Provide residents with accurate and timely information about projects that may affect the community.
- Clearly identify which governmental agency has authority over each project.
- Review projects within the City's jurisdiction for compliance with applicable objective standards and building, fire, engineering and public-safety requirements.
- Communicate community concerns to State, County and other responsible agencies when the City does not have decision-making authority.
- Advocate for meaningful community outreach by project developers and responsible agencies.
- Continue advocating for state housing policies that preserve appropriate opportunities for local input while complying with California law.

Learn More About California Housing Laws

California housing laws have significantly changed the development approval process for cities throughout the state. For additional information about SB 4, Density Bonus Law and other state housing legislation affecting Covina, visit the City's State Housing Laws webpage.

View State Housing Laws

Last updated: August 2026. Project descriptions are based on information available to the City as of the date above. Proposed project designs, unit counts, schedules and other details are subject to change as projects proceed through applicable review and development processes.

PROPOSED PROJECTS in Covina

- These new projects are permitted by California State law or outside the City's boundaries.
- While the City is not the decision-making authority for these projects, we are committed to providing accurate information to our community.
- We want to help ensure your voice is heard by the appropriate agencies/organizations that are leading these projects.

Saffron Covina

19516 E. Cypress Street

As proposed, the project is as follows:

Unit count:

94 units

Target population to serve:

100% affordable

Number of parking spaces proposed:

20

How tall the project will be:

82'-6"



Saffron Covina
www.saffroncovina.com

Methodist Church Property

437 W. San Bernardino Road

As proposed, the project is as follows:

Unit count:

70 units

Target population to serve:

100% affordable

Number of parking spaces proposed:

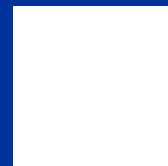
8 stalls

How tall the project will be:

45'-6"

Exemptions:

Density Bonus/ SB 4



Methodist Church Project
Covina Methodist Church
(626) 339-7386

State Surplus Site

233 N. Second Avenue

As proposed, the project is as follows:

Unit count:

60 units

Target population to serve:

100% affordable for seniors

Number of parking spaces proposed:

30

How tall the project will be:

75'

Exemptions:

State of CA Excess Sites
Program/Executive Order N-06-19



State Surplus Site Project
Laing Companies
(424) 652-8343



CITY OF COVINA

125 East College Street • Covina, California 91723-2199
www.covinaca.gov

August 18, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: State Housing Mandates and Their Impact on the Covina Community

Dear Governor Newsom,

The City of Covina shares the State's commitment to addressing California's housing crisis, and we have worked in good faith to meet our Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) obligations. But the cumulative effect of years of State housing legislation has steadily removed the discretion our City needs to responsibly manage growth and has left our community without a meaningful voice in projects that will permanently reshape their neighborhoods.

Over the past several years, the State has enacted a series of laws that streamline housing approvals, limit environmental review, and narrow the grounds on which a city may deny or condition a qualifying project. Taken individually, each law was framed as a targeted fix. Taken together, they have shifted approval authority away from local government and toward a ministerial, by-right process. When paired with the threat of the Builder's Remedy for jurisdictions still finalizing Housing Element compliance, cities like Covina are left to approve projects as a matter of law, regardless of the concerns our residents raise.

This is not a hypothetical concern for Covina; it is happening right now. Three separate affordable housing projects are actively moving forward in our community under this State framework: the State-owned property at 2nd Avenue and Italia Street, proposed as senior affordable housing; the Covina Methodist Church affordable housing site at San Bernardino Road and Hollenbeck Avenue; and the Saffron Covina affordable housing project on Cypress Street, just east of Grand Avenue in unincorporated Los Angeles County. Construction fencing has already been installed at the State-owned site, a visible sign to residents that a project is underway that they know little about.

A common thread among all three projects is that the developers have conducted little to no public outreach to inform neighbors and the broader community about what is being proposed. Under the ministerial approval pathways created by State law, the City has limited to no discretionary

authority to require that outreach, and limited ability to condition approval on it. The result is that Covina residents are learning about significant changes to their neighborhoods only after the fact, through fencing at a job site rather than through a public process, and are, understandably, looking to their local government for answers we are increasingly unable to provide.

Governor, Covina is committed to doing its part to help solve California's housing shortage. What we are asking for is not a retreat from that goal, but a partnership that restores a role for cities and residents in shaping how that growth happens. We respectfully urge your administration to pause and reassess the cumulative effect of these ministerial approval laws, and to consider measures, such as baseline community outreach requirements for developers utilizing these State exemptions, that would allow housing production to continue while restoring public trust in the process.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and welcome the opportunity to discuss how the State and the City of Covina can work together to better serve our shared constituents.

Respectfully,

Hector Delgado
Mayor
City of Covina

CC: Honorable Susan Rubio, Senator, 22nd District
Honorable Blanca Rubio, Assemblymember, 48th District