

February 9, 2019

Oregon Legislature 2019

HB2001

I am writing in opposition to this bill. While this bill is being marketed as a way to provide affordable housing, it does the opposite and destroys our communities, will increase housing prices, affect our government agencies ability to support the density and create congestion in our neighborhoods with no parking.

Oregon is an example to across the country of how to do Land Use Planning. We have worked hard to prevent urban sprawl while providing housing within our urban growth boundaries to support growth. Land use zoning is used to evaluate whether or not there is sufficient types of housing to meet the needs as well as plan for supporting infrastructure and public transit. Each community is able to plan their area to meet their community needs, unique character, values and interests. Town centers are formed where higher density housing, with supporting infrastructure and public transit can support. Single family neighborhoods are created with supporting infrastructure in them to support that type of community. What we have is unique and it works.

The rising prices you see are not a result of low housing stock, rather a result of abuse of old land use codes that allowed greedy developers to demolish quality, older homes in established neighborhoods and replacing them with massive, out of scale, single homes at double the price of what they paid for the smaller original home. Affordable older housing complexes are being torn down and replaced with high end units that rent for sometime 3 times the price of the older residents.

What is the solution? ADU's have been a good way of providing smaller affordable housing within these neighborhoods. Codes already exist to allow these in place. No state wide bill is needed. What is needed are changes to land use code that promote protection of historical buildings, promote retention of quality housing stock, not demolishing them. In St. Paul, MN they provide for division of massive older homes into condominiums within the existing structure, retaining the exterior and maintain the unique character of the neighborhood. This is the type of land use proposal that large cities, such as Portland, should promote.

This bill takes away the rights of local government agencies and their citizens, by imposing requirements on them that may not be compatible to their communities as planned, infrastructure, or community character or needs. What is acceptable or needed in one community, may not be in another. That is why we have representatives from across the state, that is why we have local elected officials.

As an engineer, I am greatly concerned that this type of massive change will have huge unanticipated consequences to our communities, by increasing the burden on the infrastructure without adequate time or money to make the needed plan, fund and complete improvements to support the density. Increased demands result in increased needs for infrastructure which will require funding. This bill also affects collection of System Development Charges (SDC) which is critical to collect to pay for the infrastructure to accommodate the growth. Low income or not, more people means more demand for the infrastructure (water, sewer, transportation). Land Use plans and zoning allow adequate planning of the infrastructure. Having exceptions to the code that provide for higher density in an uncontrolled fashion is problematic for the infrastructure planning as well as the affordability to make the needed improvements.

Another aspect of this bill that is disturbing, is the provision that calls for payment of attorney fees appeals from attorneys of middle housing developers. This will provision will promote appeals and burden our court system, as well as potentially increase costs to our local governments.

Why do we need a state-wide bill pushing this agenda? Allow each local government to take care of their citizens who elected them. Let our unique system of planning, continue to plan for growth within our individual unique communities, within their urban growth boundary.

I ask you to vote NO on HB2001.

Sincerely,

Mary Nelson, P.E.