

Watts Remy

From: Brooke Best <bvbseattle@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2019 6:41 AM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: Fwd: In Support of SB 927 and 929

Dear Senator Dembrow and Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I wholeheartedly support Restore Oregon's position that "it's time to fix Oregon's broken preservation system." The two bills put forward by your committee, SB 927 and SB 929, provide a means to encourage historic preservation in our state by establishing better measures for the stewardship of our irreplaceable historic resources.

The Public Participation in Preservation Act (SB 927) brings Oregon in line with the rest of the U.S. and make preservation "more equitable, flexible, relevant, and community-centered." The most impactful piece of this legislation is that it replaces Oregon's onerous owner consent law – which gives a community little or no voice in deciding which places are worthy of historic designation and protection – and create a public process for greater participation.

This bill allows local governments to develop historic resource program to designate resources for protection and uncouples the state's dependence on the National Register as the basis for protections. This change allows nominations to come from the property owner and/or community stakeholders. Local designation criteria would be written to reflect community values and be "consistent with statewide land use planning goals and rules" (Section 3.2). The bill also includes requirements for local public process. Once designated, landmarked properties would require a demolition review by the local government (Section 3.6).

The Preservation, Housing, and Seismic Safety Act (SB 929) provides critical funding toward the protection of the state's historic properties. Oregon is one of the few states without a tax-based incentive for rehabilitation, placing thousands of historic properties at risk. This bill creates tax credit for certified historic property project contributions, including a 25% rebate on qualified rehabilitation costs and 35% for seismic upgrades. The rehab rebates would come from a preservation fund, "State Historic Property Project Fund", created by the auctioning of state income tax credits. Further, it prioritizes projects that "retain or create housing" and ensures that at least 30% of funds are distributed to small and rural projects.

The End Game

Both of these bills would curb the demolition derby, felt especially hard in cities like Portland, and encourage stewardship of our architectural and cultural heritage. They allow a better balance of public benefits, private property rights, economic development, and community goals. SB929 makes an important link with the creation of a financial tool for rehabilitation, conversion into housing, and seismic upgrades. These bills will provide an added boost to a community's economic development with vibrant, historic places that matter!

I commend the Committee for your thoughtful consideration of this legislation – at a time when preservation is under assault by the shiny, new development that's taking over our cities and neighborhoods, and robbing us of our sense of place.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding this important legislation.

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