

To the Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 10 as amended. You will hear a lot of testimony in opposition to the engagement of the Legislature in what has been, to date, a local planning action, namely the application of zoning to properties within the jurisdiction of individual cities and counties. Some will say that legislative action at the State level to affect local zoning is contrary to the intentions of the Oregon Land Use Planning program.

However, it is worth noting that had the Legislature not acted in 1973, there would be no Oregon Land Use Planning program. Left on their own, jurisdictions will not change zoning or anything like it absent some action from the State or Federal governments. In fact, the only thing that has changed zoning in any meaningful way has been State not local action. UGBs, the Metropolitan Housing Rule, the Transportation planning rule and other actions taken by the State are the primary reasons why Oregon has so much to show from its land use planning efforts.

Ideally, cities and counties would recognize that limiting new housing development to vacant land or to the very small land area set aside for multifamily development is a recipe for a lack of production, unaffordability, and exclusion. Ideally, cities and counties would recognize that massive public investment in transit and other infrastructure should be met by increased expectations for greater housing development, even in so-called "developed" neighborhoods. Ideally, cities and counties would recognize that people make great neighborhoods, not nostalgic bows to past architectural trends and fads. Ideally, cities and counties would recognize that piecemeal approaches to zoning do not eliminate the responsibility that all neighborhoods, and all jurisdictions have to provide places for new housing in the housing markets that envelope them.

Certainly, some cities and counties will, at least in part, recognize these "ideal" conditions and act to achieve them. However, too many will not, and too much of our cities are simply off limits to the housing development needed by present and future residents. Simply put, the gap between what cities and counties would ideally recognize and do, and what they actually do and won't pursue every day makes SB 10, as amended, necessary, reasonable, and needed in Oregon, statewide, today.

To a large degree, cities and counties are representing the wishes of their most vocal homeowners constituents when they voice opposition to SB 10, as amended. And certainly, homeowners with few other savings are scared that your action could diminish the one real asset that they may own. However, privileging one group of residents at the expense of a large and growing group of citizens in need of real housing choices is simply not defensible.

Further, pushing development further out is both needlessly expensive for all taxpayers and ratepayers, and flies in the face of other critical community and State goals for climate, fiscal stability, and equity.

In a good and perfect world, the Legislature wouldn't be engaged in what is essentially a zoning action. Policy would be its responsibility with implementation and application left to others. However, for the reasons stated above, in this instance the Legislature must and should act. Senate Bill 10, as amended, is a useful and legitimate step towards addressing what has for too long been ignored at the local level.

Thanks for the chance to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Ethan Seltzer

3082 NE Regents Drive

Portland, Oregon 97212

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Ethan Seltzer
503-544-8228 c
seltzere@gmail.com