

Submitter: Eli Spevak  
On Behalf Of: Orange Splot LLC  
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development  
Measure: SB847

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Eli Spevak and I've been developing housing in the Portland area for nearly 30 years, including a decade with the Housing Development Center building affordable housing. I've served on Portland's planning commission for the past 7 years and on the state's ReBuilding Task force last year.

I strongly support SB 847, particularly:

- Removing prevailing wage requirements for mixed use affordable housing projects
- Amendment -4 that would allow taller 1-stair buildings.

Mixed use affordable housing.

I live in the Cully neighborhood of NE Portland. Within the past year, 3 affordable housing developments have opened on 3 sides of me. They're each 4-5 stories in height, with 50+ units. This is tremendous, as we desperately need affordable housing in a quickly gentrifying neighborhood. But we also need ground floor retail opportunities, including for small businesses, and for child care. We got none of these in any of the above-mentioned projects. And the reason is that doing so would have triggered prevailing wage requirements for the entire building, making them cost-prohibitive to develop in the first place.

On one of these commercial strips, I bought a roughly 100x100 property several years ago with a small 1-story restaurant. My plan is to redevelop the site into a 4-5 story mixed use building, as allowed by zoning and appropriate for this location. And I'm actually a developer who knows how to develop this sort of project. But we need active ground floors on this strip, and my commitment to integrate that into my development drove me to design a building that will be market rate above, retail below. I would rather have made the housing affordable with retail below, and feel that I shouldn't have had to make that choice.

Prevailing wage requirements extend beyond individual projects - into land use planning. Serving on the planning commission, we re-wrote the rules for mixed use zones a few years ago. These zones line our main streets, where ground floor active uses are important for vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. But in developing zoning regulations, we received feedback from non-profits and the public that requiring any active ground floor uses in these corridors would effectively block affordable housing along them, which we also desperately need. Informed by this feedback, we were

ultimately quite stingy in ground floor active use requirements –tying back once more to BOLI wage rate requirements.

#### Taller 1-stair buildings

As an appointee last year to the state's ReBuilding Task Force, I searched far and wide for any policy change that would both decrease the carbon footprint of buildings and reduce construction costs. There's not much that fits that bill. But one such item would be to allow taller 1-stair buildings.

Really, it's not so much about the stairs; it's about having to design around the inevitable corridor between them – which leads to narrow units with limited windows at one end. With a single stair option, there's less circulation space to build, less corridor & stair volume to heat/cool over the life of the building, and designs support units with windows & natural ventilation on 2 sides. Finally, this change would make it possible to develop multi-story housing with accessible units on smaller, in-fill lots.

Oregon wouldn't be the first to do this. With appropriate guardrails, capping the height and the number of apartments on each floor, this can be done safely – just as has already been done in Seattle, much of Canada, Germany, Austria, Mexico, Japan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eli Spevak  
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