

March 24, 2023

Testimony in FAVOR of HB 3414 with -1 Amendments

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Helfrich and members of the committee,

My name is Natalie Janney and I am a civil engineering with Multi/Tech Engineering. We design primarily subdivision and multi-family projects throughout Oregon. I am also a member of Governor Kotek's Housing Production Advisory Council.

I would like to voice my support of HB 3414.

I don't think anyone is debating that we have a housing problem in the State of Oregon. The real question is how are we going to fix it. In my experience of designing and getting projects from conceptual design through land use and then construction permitting, I have a lot of opinions of things that can be done. HB 3414 is a great step in the right direction.

Several jurisdictions have recently changed their code away from the term variance. Now a lot of cities call them adjustments, but I believe Section 2 would account for these adjustments as well. I can think of several examples of how Section 2 would ease restrictions and costs for development. For the sake of brevity, I will give one.

A few jurisdictions in Oregon have block length requirements for new developments. One jurisdiction has a 600 foot requirement, meaning that you have to have a street every breaking up blocks every 600 feet. The intent to so that blocks don't get too long to walk around. However, 600 feet is fairly arbitrary. We have one project where the subject property abuts a very long piece of property with single ownership. The block length requirement would result in 5 street connections. We believe 3 street connections would be sufficient.

These additional street connections not only remove buildable lots, there are several other unintended consequences. Streets carrying more than just traffic, they also almost always result in the extension of underground services. In addition to the added construction costs of the pavement, curb and sidewalk, there are more underground pipe systems. More hard surface means more stormwater generated that must be treated and detained. These additional costs have to be distributed to the other lots in the development, making all of the lots more expensive. Not to mention that additional streets cause more maintenance for public entities to take care of.

In terms of cost, the loss of one lot combined with the increase construction costs for providing a street connection is about \$200,000. And while some might consider that a small amount in the course of a housing development, the problem is that each project seems to have at least one issue like that and they are cumulative. Between added construction costs, loss of revenue, and the loss of a housing it becomes death by a thousand paper cuts.

The Housing Accountability and Production Office also has a lot of potential to ensure local governments stay motivated and engaged in getting projects through the land use and engineering process.

Given that housing projects take multiple years to get from beginning to housing, any steps we can take to make the process less expensive and more efficient is positive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.


Natalie Janney, P.E.