



Sightline Institute is an independent think tank working to advance sustainability in the Pacific Northwest. We believe it exists at the intersection of environmental health and social justice.

We're writing in **support** of provisions in SB 977 that would remove unintended barriers to mixed uses in affordable housing projects.

When people choose to live close to other people, they **voluntarily cut their energy use roughly in half**: they enjoy shorter trips, fewer trips by car, shared walls, and efficient utilities. Though we will never persuade everyone to live in proximity to other people, all Oregonians should all be able to agree that *if people want to make this choice*, we should get out of the way of it.

One way to advance voluntary proximity is with mixed commercial and residential buildings – whether that's a childcare service, a little coffee shop, or any other local amenity. Another way is with housing subsidies, which (in addition to their obvious housing benefits) give the option of proximity to people who couldn't otherwise afford it.

Adding more flexibility to the existing affordable-housing carveout on prevailing wages would advance both of these goals. Current policy, especially in combination with local mandates for ground-floor active uses, helps almost nobody. Residents of affordable housing lose access to a commercial amenity; affordable housing developers put their precious dollars into ground-floor spaces that often sit empty; and prevailing wages don't get paid.

Today's rules are clearly failing to work as intended. Please advance changes as recommended by Housing Oregon and the Oregon Housing Alliance.

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