

Submitter: Jeff Willemsen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3589

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to ask for your support for HB 3589. I am opposed to residential properties in any historic residential neighborhood being transformed into a commercial business and used as a short term rental. The Gaeity Hill Bush Pasture Park Historic District is a residential district and a purely commercial business such as a short term rental has no place in the district. Further, given the extreme housing shortage in Salem and throughout the state, and the resultant affordability problem for many families, it makes no sense to turn a large single family home into a hotel with more parking. It defies the intent and purpose of a residential neighborhood and an increase in parking spaces is most certainly not appropriate in a historic neighborhood. If the owners instead want to live in the home and rent out some of the rooms, either on a short term or long term basis, I would have no issue with such a mixed use.

Having a commercial business, basically a hotel, in the middle of a small, historic residential neighborhood would have a major impact on the neighborhood, especially when combined with the other commercial businesses already here. Each time a house in our neighborhood becomes a commercial enterprise rather than a home, a hole is torn in the social fabric of our community. Rather than neighbors who watch out for and care for each other, we instead have short term transient occupants who contribute nothing yet take away from our sense of community and safety. Having owners off-site means they are not part of the daily life of our neighborhood nor do they contribute to the social fabric. They are not part of what makes a house a home and a collection of houses a neighborhood. All of these negative impacts are magnified in our very small neighborhood (approximately 50 homes) already bordered on every side by non-residential development. Why allow even more of it to invade our historic, residential neighborhood?

I urge you to closely study the long term detrimental effects of converting single family homes to short term rentals (STRs). The issue has been documented and studied throughout the world, due to the explosion of STRs in the last decade. It is an ever growing problem in Salem and throughout the state and now is the time to address it, not when it reaches crisis proportion, as it has in many coastal communities in Oregon and other locations throughout the US. To me, it makes no sense to pass an expensive bill to address the housing crisis in Oregon (HB 5019) while simultaneously allowing the growing number of STRs to go unchecked, thereby worsening the problem.

Here is just one resource, which includes many others, specifically geared towards local governments: <https://mrsc.org/stay-informed/mrsc-insight/december-2021/affordable-housing-and-the-impact-of-short-term-re>

As you will see if you read some of the articles imbedded above, STRs worsen the housing affordability crisis, both for renters and would be buyers, and this has a stronger long-term negative economic effect on communities than any short-term positive economic effect from STRs. Owner occupied STRs, however, are the exception that can be a positive for communities, owners, and renters. Not only do they not remove entire single family homes from the housing stock, which I'm sure you know is critically low throughout the state, but they mostly address the concerns of home owners in residential neighborhoods who don't want to deal with the negatives that often accompany STRs, including loud guests, parking issues, criminal activity, garbage, etc.

I hope that after studying the issue of STRs you will work towards severely limiting and regulating them, especially in historic districts, and instead institute policies that encourage owner-occupied STRs as a healthy economic alternative for our city and our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jeff Willemsen