

W. Darin Rutledge
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**Co-Chairs Sen. Fred Girod & Rep. Paul Holvey and
Members of Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction**

RE: SUPPORT For House Bill 5030, Section 12 (\$20m Main Street funding)

I am writing to encourage your passage of House Bill 5030 with no changes to section 12, which includes allocation of \$20 million in funding for the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant.

I write to you as a wearer of multiple hats – as a former director of an Oregon Main Street organization that has received three Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grants; as a board member of Restore Oregon, Oregon’s only non-profit historic preservation organization; and as a current destination marketing professional responsible for the creation of an attractive destination that serves both its residents and visitors.

Under each and every one of these hats, I can affirm the importance of the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant and the value it has delivered to Oregon’s communities, particularly those not near an urban hub.

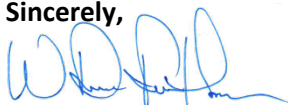
This critical funding has saved some of Oregon’s most cherished historic buildings. It has empowered new businesses that created new jobs. It has revitalized so many Main Streets. It has opened the door to projects that literally would not have been feasible otherwise. And, notably in my community, this funding has enabled the creation of more than two dozen housing units that are key to creating vibrant 24-hour communities in our downtown and by establishing a market of right-sized rental units that are accessible to those all along the economic spectrum.

As a former Main Street professional, I know that utilizing our existing buildings for new development is far and away more economical and sustainable than new infill development. In a recent report released by Oregon Heritage, [“What’s Up Downtown?”](#) reports that upper floors in Oregon’s downtowns are underutilized by as much as 50%. The report also includes a playbook for activating those spaces. Main Street America has also lent its expertise and influence with its own [“Housing Guidebook For Local Leaders”](#), proving that reuse of our downtown commercial spaces for residential development is not just a niche idea or emerging trend; rather, it’s an efficient, economical, and “shovel-ready” opportunity to increase residential availability right now.

That said, the barriers to this type of redevelopment are numerous and cumbersome, often leading to pro forma assessments that are less than compelling – particularly in rural areas where rental comparators are not viable to fully prove out the cost model. That’s where the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant is making a significant impact statewide – by providing gap and/or last-mile funding that gets these projects across the finish line.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify once again on behalf of the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant, which is making significant impacts in every corner of our state. I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 5030 with no changes to section 12.

Sincerely,



W. Darin Rutledge
Klamath Falls, Oregon