

Submitter: Alenna Sebben
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

As currently proposed, HB 3414 would allow developers to bypass city codes and processes in place to protect our built and natural resources, including regulations governing the alteration of landmark properties and new construction in designated districts, without demanding any increased density or level of affordability. Although the current version of the bill includes a list of exceptions that allow regulations relating to density, height, and floor-to-area ratio to remain, all other protections in place to avoid incompatible new development will no longer apply, if a developer asks for a variance under HB 3414. This would eliminate design compatibility protections such as massing, orientation, materials, windows, character-defining features, and stylistic detailing, as well as setbacks and tree preservation obligations for new residential development in every zone where residential uses are allowed. HB 3414 authorized variances will occur with no public notice and other than for the developer, there is no right to appeal.

While the stated intent is to spur more housing production, it's conceivable the results would do exactly the opposite. Whatever cost savings a developer may realize as a result of eliminating windows, trees, and setbacks do not need to be passed on to any future residents. There are many ways that we can support streamlining and incentivizing housing in a preservation- and climate-friendly manner while not sacrificing our existing resources – both built and natural. Let's not slide backwards or cater to those who develop and leave us with a future liability rather than an asset.