

Submitter: Roger Watkins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

As with HB 3414, which was defeated in last year's session, the proposed bill SB 1537 will not increase the construction of affordable housing in historic districts. Rather, it would merely allow developers the unfettered ability to demolish homes and replace them with even more expensive housing, including historically contributing homes protected pursuant to their federal designation in national historic districts.

Most, if not all, of those homes would be considered family housing. Evidence shows developers replace those homes with multiple units, requiring that they reduce the number of bedrooms in the homes to, often times, two bedrooms as showcased by a recent tear-down of a "contributing" resource in Irvington that is currently in the process of being replaced by four town homes, each targeted to sell for over \$1 million. Thus, family homes and children are displaced from the center of the city. Irvington, like many of Portland's Historic Districts has a substantial number of historic multi-family buildings, referred to as "NOAH"; Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing. In Irvington, these provide housing for a large number of families with incomes at or below the City of Portland median according to Census Bureau statistics. SB 1537 is an open invitation to developers to demolish these NOAH structures for replacement with "market rate" high-end housing.

After years of planning the City of Portland just adopted a plan to encourage more affordable housing, including in Historic Districts, while also protecting historic resources. That plan should be given time to take effect before the state takes the unprecedented step of overruling local land use laws as well as federal laws enacted to protect our historical structures.

In order to provide continued protection to Oregon's historic resources, I request that an exemption to properties within historic districts is written into the bill.

Roger Watkins, 2201 NE 23rd Ave., Portland