

Submitter: Kristin Roche
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3499

Hi, I am writing to support HB 3499.

The City of Wilsonville has been a prolific user of Urban Renewal or TIF (tax increment financing) for nearly 40 years. Perhaps more than any other city per capita in the State of Oregon. Where has this gotten our community? We are perhaps the most BLIGHTED city in Oregon...empty buildings abound. A 15 minute drive around town shows the extent of these failed policies...Fry's has sat empty for 6 years, Regal Cinemas, dozens of empty retail shops to name just a few.

Every municipality that creates an UR district should first be required to allow their community members the opportunity to vote on the project. Moreover details of how these UR funds are to be used should be disclosed UP FRONT to residents; not hidden.

Unfortunately the Spring of 2024 residents of Wilsonville were kept in the dark with critical details with Measure 3-605 in May 2024. As a 97070 resident, I watched this past year (Spring 2024) while the City of Wilsonville strategically dodged direct questions from hundreds of residents via in-person forums (Charbonneau Country Club in April 2024), via comments at City Council meetings, via on City sponsored Facebook, Instagram, X advertisements and via open-records records (\$2308 to answer yes/no/basic questions). This should not happen.

It is the duty for every municipality, its elected leaders and city staff members to be transparent with the public on the full details of UR projects. Sadly this did not occur for the residents of Wilsonville. Instead City leaders and staff intentionally dodged direct questions for months leading up to the May 2024 election and then double-down by attacking residents that brought to light the City's own UR Feasibility Study by citing "social media misinformation."

The City of Wilsonville went so far as to create a monthly article called "Mythbusting" in its printed publication to residents to combat truths residents uncovered. The City had promoted the new Town Center using UR would have no more than 1600 multi-units in the 100 acres. The City FAILED TO DISCLOSE TO RESIDENTS THE GUTS OF ITS 2023 URBAN RENEWAL FEASIBILITY STUDY which on page 61 detail 4,179 units. Instead of acknowledging this, the City attacked residents for spreading "misinformation." (https://www.wilsonvilleoregon.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/urban_renewal_task_force/meeting/127529/urban_renewal_feasibility_study_2023_1_28_with_appendices.pdf)

In September 2024 the City of Wilsonville used taxpayer money to print 14,000 copies of its monthly Boones Ferry Manager to detail only 1600 units were to be built. When the City received pushback it published a "caveat" ONLINE ONLY (not a printed retraction) that stated:

"Why the discrepancy?

"The Town Center Plan is looking at what we think the market will deliver over the next three-plus decades, whereas the feasibility study looks at capacity to say 'if development were maximized, and every property that could reasonably redevelop did redevelop, what's the real capacity?',” explained Matt Lorenzen, the City’s Economic Development Manager. “The study looks at the maximum development scenario for the purpose of making sure we would have the debt capacity available to build the infrastructure needed to support maximum development.” At the bottom of the City’ "caveat" it DISCLOSES THIS DETAIL:

"So, while it’s highly unlikely that the number of new residences in Town Center over 40 years would approach 4,000 by 2060, it’s not impossible."
(<https://www.wilsonvilleoregon.gov/administration/page/mythbusting>)

Is this good leadership? Is this a municipality being HONEST, TRANSPARENT with the public? Wilsonville should be a case study on the importance of this bill. What elected representative would oppose giving their citizens the right to weigh in on these important use of TAXPAYER DOLLARS?

The question is when urban renewal districts are formed shouldn't residents have a voice in how these funds are used?