

June 20, 2017

To the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
RE: HB 2007

Please vote NO on HB 2007 that is before you; if you are inclined to support the bill, please do so only with amendments proposed by the Portland Coalition for Historic Resources (PCHR). I have spent 11 years as a city planner, and the past 35 years working in the historic preservation field, as executive director at Historic Seattle and then at Portland's Bosco-Milligan Foundation/Architectural Heritage Center; I retired as founding director from there in 2016. Since 2000, when I married my late husband, I have been a resident and property owner in Columbia County, outside of Scappoose.

I offer the perspective as an experienced city planner and cultural resource specialist, and a Portland and Scappoose homeowner; what I and many others see in HB 2007 flies in the face of good and predictable planning for Oregon cities and counties. HB 2007 is a flawed and **very expensive** strategy proposing to fix all that is challenging regarding housing affordability - - it will do the exact opposite of that.

HB 2007 will gut single-family zoning in all Oregon cities and counties, not just Portland. All of the work invested in comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances will be tossed aside, to carry out the mandates of HB 2007. How will cities and counties pay for that new work?

HB 2007 will gut historic preservation programs and implementing ordinances, adopted by cities and counties to meet Land Use Planning Goal #5 since the 1980s, and updated since. Residential historic districts throughout the state that celebrate and preserve their heritage will be under siege, for no good reasons.

Why was this bill proposed? Because 1000 Friends of Oregon and the Oregon Homebuilders Association say it's the answer to creating more housing! The HBA's obvious financial benefits are transparent. But the fairy-tale "*A Home for Everyone*" from 1000 Friends is especially deceitful. NOTHING will require that the proposed and dense-pack housing in neighborhoods across the state be "affordable."

As a former practicing planner, I understand the importance of Land Use Goal #10 – Housing. BUT there are other goals that HB 2007 especially violates – Goal 1 - Citizen Involvement, Goal #2 – Land Use Planning, and Goal #5 – Open Space, Scenic & Historic Resources. Oregon's revered land use planning program - - since the 1970s - - has required that all cities and counties address and comply with all of the goals. Oregon cities and counties have done that for decades!

I need to address an especially offensive accusation by HB 2007's sponsors and proponents – that those of us who oppose the bill are "racist" because "*we don't want people in our neighborhoods who aren't like us.*" Since the 1980s, the historic preservation movement has broadened to include ALL people, with a dedicated focus to the American experience of People of Color, especially African Americans. Since 1993, we have worked to establish and continue a focused effort to document, celebrate, and preserve Portland's buildings associated with the African American community. In 1998, we identified 1,284 standing buildings related to Portland's African American heritage. That work was generated by 133 people, 127 of who are African American. In a 2010 update, in preparation for Portland's updating of its comprehensive plan, we learned that 13 of those buildings were demolished between 1998 and mid-2010. A mid-2014 update showed the demolition of another 15 buildings.

But SINCE THEN, at least 60 of our African American buildings have been demolished and the pace is only accelerating - - we find a new demolition almost every week! The city of Portland has done nothing to

promote protecting our African American building heritage for years; a recent new project will determine the “qualifying criteria” for those buildings to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and only with owner consent. I am a consultant on that project, with an African American professional team; it follows our earlier work, with the same team, on identifying the many buildings in 1998 and since.

HB 2007 will only make the implementation of that work difficult, if not impossible. Many of our African American building resources are small and modest, providing renters and homeowners alike with affordable housing; these are the very houses being targeted for demolition and construction of huge and expensive new replacement houses. These buildings also house small businesses. This is gentrification and it is in full swing. Long-time homeowners are finding that they can’t afford the rising property values and taxes in their old suddenly “hot” neighborhoods; rising rents are displacing long-time residents, as owners struggle to also pay those same taxes and must raise rents to do so.

Historic resources have long contributed to the economic vitality and the community-building of small towns, larger cities, and ethnic neighborhoods - - if we have the ability to preserve them. HB 2007 will take away all of that, in the name of “*a home for everyone*” - - hardly!

For anyone who is thinking “*well, you live in rural Columbia County, where just about everyone is White*”, again, I beg to differ. I live here because my African American husband chose to move here in 1977; as a well-known jazz and blues musician and vocalist, he wanted to live away from the Portland club scene and greatly valued his privacy. He always supported my work on documenting Portland’s African American building heritage; he lived that Portland experience himself, growing up at N Williams Avenue and Tillamook Street and becoming part of the Williams Avenue music-scene. He also lived to witness much of its destruction in the name of public sector decision-makers who professed to “know what’s good for your community.” HB 2007 has an all-too-familiar feel to it!

Finally, as someone who lives outside of Portland, I resent a “Portland Problem” and “Portland-Solution” being advanced by two state-wide organizations who profess to know what-is-good-for-all-of- Oregon. All local communities elect their own leaders, and appoint its own citizens to its own Planning Commissions and Landmarks Commissions - - to make its own decisions that need to comply with Oregon’s land use planning rules and regulations.

I regret that I am unable to attend your meeting in person because of mobility limitations. You are welcome to contact me. I can be reached at sweetbj@centurytel.net . I’m happy to call you if you contact me by email.

I thank you for your careful deliberation of HB 2007. Please don’t support a bill that will irreparably damage the hard-earned progress made in Oregon’s cities and counties in land use planning and in preserving its own historic resources.

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