

From: Chip Rosenfeld
To: Sen.LewFrederick@state.or.us; Rep.BradWitt@state.or.us; Sen.FredGirod@state.or.us; [Sen.Taylor](mailto:Sen.Taylor@state.or.us); Rep.SalEsquivel@state.or.us; rep.kenhelm@state.or.us; [Rep.Lewis](mailto:Rep.Lewis@state.or.us); [Rep.Power](mailto:Rep.Power@state.or.us); [JWMNR Exhibits](#)
Cc: [John Liu](mailto:John.Liu@state.or.us)
Subject: OPPOSED to HB 2007
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2017 3:00:33 PM

I am strongly opposed to HB 2007, as it does nothing to effectively address our crisis with affordable housing. Instead, what might have started out with urgent and laudable goals of improving affordability and intra-urban density, has evidently morphed instead into an unchecked developer's dream, worsening the urban gentrification and non-affordability crises.

Limit Fast-Track Approval to Affordable Housing Only!

Promoting and fast-tracking demolitions of more modest homes to be replaced with expensive and out-of-scale homes and duplexes (that are NOT required to be "affordable") improves developers' profits but does not address goals of improving affordable housing.

Streamlining the building permitting process as outlined in HB2007 does seem like a worthy goal, to accelerate necessary home construction and minimize the hassle factor in doing so currently imposed on builders. Such fast-tracking of building permits does make sense when needed to urgently create affordable housing, but makes no sense when used to accelerate the demolition of smaller more modest homes and construction of more expensive homes or duplexes; this does nothing to meet the stated affordable-housing goals of this bill.

Affordable Housing

In my neighborhood (Laurelhurst, Portland), there have been ~30 demolitions (and "loop-hole demolitions") over the past ten years (details available upon request). The houses uniformly targeted for demolition by the developers supporting this bill are the smaller less expensive bungalows (ie those most affordable to young families); in their place larger much more expensive homes are erected. A closer analysis of the homes built after such demolitions here in Laurelhurst and in the Beaumont-Wilshire neighborhood in Portland (also available on request) shows a 250% increase in both square footage and price of the infill construction. It is rightly anticipated that such demolitions will accelerate in the wake of the City of Portland Residential Infill Project as developers are incentivized to raze existing homes in favor of large less-affordable (and often unsightly) duplexes and triplexes.

Such an increase in demolitions will irreversibly destroy the fabric and character of an existing neighborhood, and will do nothing for the worthy goal of creating affordable housing.

In the midst of rapid increases in housing costs (for owners and renters), focusing on

creating more affordable housing is a laudable goal. The most affordable home is/has always been the existing home; even when modifications to that home are needed (eg internal conversion to duplexes), the demolition of an existing home to construct a newer one always leads to much more expensive housing. The path to solving the affordable housing challenge facing our state must include prohibitions against destroying existing modest homes (demolitions can be allowed by exception of course, when needed for safety/health reasons), promoting internal conversion to duplexes, and promoting creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). We favor internal conversion of older historic homes into duplexes and triplexes, and creation of internal or external ADUs. We do not favor demolition of older smaller homes to create more expensive ones.

Demolitions also cause health hazards for the neighborhood, and create significantly negative environmental impact in terms of landfill and carbon footprint.

HB 2007 encourages demolitions to create more duplexes, but does not stipulate that these be "affordable". HB 2007 does not require that housing developments allowed to bypass design review have to be "affordable". HB 2007 does not require that the historic houses to be demolished will be replaced by "affordable" houses. The bill clearly helps developers build expensive housing, instead of building affordable housing. **HB2007 should *clearly define "affordable" (total monthly housing cost less than 1/3 of 60% of median family income for the county, guaranteed for 80 years) and HB2007 should provide benefits only to developers of affordable housing.***

Historic Districts

Historic buildings and neighborhoods are part of the fabric of city pride, what makes Portland and Oregon special. Oregonians rightly crave continuity with their past, especially amidst rapidly-changing urban environments, and look with pride on buildings and neighborhoods which reflect their connection with the state's younger self. HB 2007 is an invitation to developers to build ad lib -- without necessary design review -- in historic districts, in the name of "needed" (ie "any") housing. Such construction without carefully crafted design review targets the unique character of the neighborhood, and results only in more expensive housing.

Many historic districts' rules already *allow* accessory dwelling units and also *allow* internally converting a house to a duplex. In historic districts, we can have *density without demolition and protect our smaller houses*. But when developers demolish historic houses, they usually tear down those smaller, more affordable historic houses to build expensive "trophy houses". Instead of encouraging demolition, HB2007 should *protect historic houses from developer demolition*.

As you know, historic districts make up less than 1% of the housing inventory in the state. Even wholesale changes in that program will have no discernible effect on the state's significant problem with available and affordable housing, yet could have an out-sized impact on the preservation of notable historic resources that link our cities

and state with our past. Once a historic resource is gone, it is gone forever.

Clear and Objective Standards in Historic Districts

The advancement of formulaic “clear and objective standards” by HB2007 will erode the unique character of a historic neighborhood. Those living in historic districts have democratically chosen to wait for the proper design review to be done, as a necessary trade-off for the review to be done right. In my neighborhood, a recent survey showed that 85% of respondents favored historic designation, to include thoughtful design review to assure infill compatibility.

Regarding “clear and objective standards: I am a retired physician, having practiced internal medicine for > 30 years. In my field, there are also “criteria” and “guidelines” and “protocols” for managing various diseases. Yet the wise medical practitioner understands when a specific case does not fit into well-intentioned and evidence-based formulas, and which instead requires special attention that does not fit into an easy recipe. Such is the case for the unique needs of a neighborhood determined by State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to have historic characteristics worthy of preserving. One-size-fits-all design review standards does not serve this need. Recent Goal 5 changes provide the flexibility for local control over design review for newly created historic districts.

Relaxing design review requirements in democratically sought historic districts such as Laurelhurst will not appreciably address the important state-wide goals of affordable and accessible housing. Let the recently enacted Goal 5 changes regarding design review in historic districts have a chance to work.

This bill should be properly focused on the important issues of truly "affordable housing" and creating affordable infill, without unnecessarily promoting more demolitions and gutting the historic districts that our neighbors clearly and democratically favor.

Thank you for listening,

Seth “Chip” Rosenfeld
4218 NE Flanders St
Portland