

Joint Ways and Means Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
H-272 Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2007

Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

As an architect, I am very concerned about the many negative effects that the proposed House Bill 2007 will have on all neighborhoods in Portland. Frankly citizens of every town and city in Oregon should be equally alarmed.

HB 2007 has been presented as a solution to the problem of unaffordable housing statewide, but it does almost nothing to incentivize creation of, through remodels or through new construction, additional truly affordable housing. Instead, it is a gift to developers who have so energetically advocated for passage of HB 2007. Is it not enough that since the Recession countless mid-rise housing developments have been built, have been permitted, or have been proposed in most neighborhoods in Portland? HB 2007 would open the flood gates for more market-rate housing in the most unlikely and unwelcome locations. I urge you to revise HB 2007 to solely encourage affordable housing.

In addition, HB 2007 incentivizes the demolition of existing, already-affordable housing, damaging the character of strong, healthy neighborhoods in Portland. Some folks are calling such a concern NIMBYism, a disparaging and dismissive retort that ignores the real damage that will come. As an architect, I can assure you that my concern does not derive from NIMBYism.

HB 2007 is top-down interference in local control over zoning. Every city and county planning and zoning body in Oregon must be furious about the proposed State intrusion that would override thoughtful consideration of how and where development occurs in each community.

It is particularly disturbing to me that HB 2007 proposes to strip protection from future historic districts. We already have rather weak regulations in Oregon concerning historic buildings and districts. HB 2007 would make Oregon even worse in that category. As an architect, I am acutely aware of how little the US and Oregon have done to save and renovate historic structures compared to all of our peer foreign countries. We need to save and restore so many of the significant buildings that tell the history of our communities, while we should incentivize new construction on vacant land such as parking lots and brownfield sites. Already new housing projects largely are located along transit corridors and near commercial nodes. Why encourage such projects to be sited within intact smaller-scale residential neighborhoods? Instead, we can increase density within existing residential neighborhoods by encouraging internal conversions of single-family homes so that they become duplexes or so that they include an ADU or two.

Regards,

Dennis M. Harper