

From: Sam Noble
To: [JWMNR Exhibits](#)
Subject: HB2007 testimony
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Members of the committee,

I live in the Mt Tabor neighborhood of Portland. I serve on the board of my local neighborhood association. Like many of my neighbors, I participated in Portland's recently completed comprehensive plan development. I make computer software for a living and I think it's okay to build needed housing for profit.

This is the first time I've ever participated in our state-level political process.

I am pleased to voice my support for HB2007, specifically with -6 amendments.

I support HB2007's effort to clarify that all housing is needed housing. I support HB2007's effort to identify ways to speed-up housing permitting, especially multi-family permitting. I also support this bill's language legalizing duplexes and accessory dwelling units anywhere that detached houses are allowed inside of an urban growth boundary. This last item is likely to happen in large portions of Portland, and I think growth will be gentler if this kind of policy is spread throughout the metropolitan region.

But I feel most strongly about two aspects of HB2007:

I believe that it's incredibly important to hold cities accountable for their zoning decisions. That means that if they zone for a particular density/intensity (floor area, height) that these be meaningful decisions and not negotiable after plans have been developed, land has been purchased, and permits requested. This kind of uncertainty in property rights adds unnecessary time, costs, and anguish to something that should be sorted out during our state-mandated planning process.

Similarly, I enthusiastically support HB2007's effort to reform state regulations of so-called "historic districts:"

First, historic districts, and the associated historic resource reviews, are extremely homeowner hostile. Being forced to comply with subjective, discretionary standards is expensive, time consuming, uncertain, and undermines a homeowners right to modify his house to meet his family's needs. As a homeowner, I'm horrified by some of the experiences described by unwitting property owners in recently designated historic districts.

Second, the process of historic designation is stacked heavily in favor of the applicant, by a bureaucracy of well-intentioned public servants focused exclusively on preservation. The only "process" is an extremely onerous objection procedure. Absolutely no weight is given to local and regional land-use plans or the actual civic value of these districts. Duly elected city governments have no say. The designation criteria themselves are extremely vague -- a district

can be historic if some unspecified number of its structures haven't been visibly modified in the last fifty years. That's about all it takes, and there's no useful way out once designation has been conferred.

Third, I believe in markets. Supply and demand are real things and they apply to housing. Demolishing an eyesore to build a nice, desirable house will keep a wealthy person from bidding-up a different house. If the higher end of the housing market were truly well served, as some opponents of this bill will claim, then there would be no incentive to build housing for this market.

For many years, Oregon law has required cities to apply clear and objective standards to housing construction, renovations, and modifications. As a result, historic designation has become a proxy for meaningful policy debate about infill, density, and local and regional planning. Applicants are frequently open about their reasons: "we want some control over what gets built," "we don't want renters in our neighborhood," and "I don't like construction noise" are all common.

"Historic" neighborhoods are nearly always well-to-do and well represented in the political process -- inspection of Portland's new zoning map should make that abundantly clear. We have our comprehensive plans that are supposed to direct growth and redevelopment, let's reaffirm our commitment to them. Let's not undermine the public participation that created them by allowing some communities to try to exclude themselves from very mild amounts of redevelopment and change. Let's fix the "historic loophole."

Thank you for your time.

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