

June 6, 2017

Dear Rep. Keny-Guyer:

It was good to hear your remarks at the May 17 town hall in Southeast Portland regarding transportation. You seemed reasonable and progressive. Which is why I can't understand your introducing such flawed legislation as SB2007.

I've read SB2007 several times (the text, not the summary). I'm not a lawyer, but I am in awe of the scope of this bill. It would dismantle the zoning practices and planning that cities and counties have spent decades working out. It will allow cities and counties to dismiss entire design review departments, as their decisions can be overridden by the state anyway.

SB 2007 has the fingerprints of business interests, real estate developers, and contractors all over it. Perhaps they even had a hand in drafting it. It is a blatant attempt to circumvent the land-use planning for which the state of Oregon is so justifiably revered.

The emergency nature of this legislation and the incredibly limited amount of time provided for coming up with proposals for housing and having designs submitted, reviewed, and implemented are worrying. For instance, just a single unit of a development needs to be set aside as "affordable," and the definition of "affordable" itself is neither adequate nor clear. Sixty years of set-aside for just one piece of a building is a laudable goal, but what is needed now is a substantial amount of affordable housing. I'm not sure SB2007 actually provides that.

Some other methods might help ease the dearth of affordable housing without trashing our hard-fought planning and preservation rules:

- 1.) Amend the state's land-use law to ease pressure on cities' urban growth boundaries, freeing up more buildable land, at the same time mandating the inclusion of affordable housing in planning development throughout cities, not just at the edges.
- 2.) Get the property-tax limitation out of the state constitution. Artificially low property taxes have allowed housing prices to rise far higher and faster than they would have otherwise. Of course, getting rid of the limitation would be very difficult politically, but that is what leaders are for.
- 3.) Subsidize the rent to allow people to live in housing that otherwise would be too expensive for them. This could be financed by taxing some of the outrageously obscene profits that builders reap when they tear down one old house and replace it with a handful of newer buildings.

In writing you, I am speaking for myself, not on the behalf of any organization. I have been paying attention, however, to Oregon tax and land-use issues and controversies since at least 1976, including nearly 35 years in the newsroom of The Oregonian.

Please, Rep. Keny-Guyer, there has to be a better way to help Oregonians afford the housing they need and deserve. Please let HB2007 die peacefully, and soon.

Respectfully,

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