

**Senate Committee on Housing
 SB 10 Public Hearing, February 25, 2019
 Testimony of Brandon Brezic, Portland, Oregon, 97219
 House District 38
 Senate District 19**

Chair Shemia Fagan,
 Vice-Chairs Dallas Heard
 And Members of the Committee,

I strongly support Senator Courtney’s proposed SB-10, which would require cities to allow more density near frequent transit and limit them from requiring parking in those locations. I work for a non-profit affordable housing developer and I am a renter in Senate District 19. I live less than a quarter mile from the future SW Corridor light-rail, walking distance to a proposed station, in an apartment complex that fits the description of the allowable density in this proposed zoning changes. Unfortunately, there are so many neighborhoods near me and in other parts of the state that are not set up for a transit-oriented future. Underutilized residential lands lead to underutilized public transit systems, places a further burden our housing crisis, and continues our reliance on automobiles. In the places where the economics are right, we would see denser development in just the places we need it, which is along frequent transit lines, so residents are less likely to use a car for every trip. This could be an important component of the state’s action to reduce Climate Change. This is what transit friendly, sustainable neighborhoods should look like! Why build light-rail, invest in bus lines, and say we care about reducing your carbon footprint if we don’t allow future development to be efficient. 45-75 units per acre isn’t high rises, it is hardly even high density. Here are some examples:

<https://www.theurbanist.org/2017/05/04/visualizing-compatible-density/>

44 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

Notable features: New urban townhouses and live-work units served by underground parking and containing private patios and a centralized, shared courtyard space.



LIVE-WORK AND REGULAR TOWNHOUSE UNITS IN SEATTLE’S LOWER QUEEN ANNE NEIGHBORHOOD. (LANDSCAPE PLAN COURTESY OF DAVID VANDERVORT ARCHITECTS)

59 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

Notable features: The whole block site transitions from four-story buildings with ground level retail to townhomes that rise only one level above the street at the northwest corner of the site. While the L-shaped, mixed-use apartment building is over 100 dwelling units per net acre, the surface parking area and townhouse building bring the block’s average density down to 59 units per net acre.



NIA APARTMENTS AND TOWNHOUSES IN WHITE CENTER.

162 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

Notable features: A 6-story, mixed-use apartment building in the very urban, First Hill neighborhood.



APARTMENTS OVER GROUND-LEVEL RETAIL IN SEATTLE’S FIRST HILL NEIGHBORHOOD. (GGLO / GOOGLE EARTH).

Additionally, by not allowing cities to require parking, this would give developers more flexibility to consider the right amount of parking, whether it is none or a smaller amount than they're now required to do. Building less parking means more and/or less expensive housing can be built in these locations. We need substantial reform in the way we addressing housing production and zoning of our residential land; SB 10 along with other proposed legislation (HB 2001) would significantly improve our state's ability to respond to the demand for housing. Cities would have to allow the density, although current buildings could stay and new small buildings could be built. But this bill makes cities allow the higher density. These change in zoning would also benefit all of the non-profit affordable housing developers in our region. We have unprecedented funding resources to build housing for our most vulnerable residents. Zoning issues and onerous land-use appeals often end up holding new developments up for months or years!

Some challenges seen with similar bills in California and Washington are the worry of displacement of existing low-income renters. Solutions have been to exempt all current rental housing from the requirements, however, I don't think this is a great anti-displacement strategy. One issue is that the state doesn't have a database of rental housing, making it nearly impossible to map this out. If we allow more units in a significant number of lots more people are housed for every lot that is redeveloped to the newly zoned capacity, ultimately displacing fewer people. If you could exempt places where dense rental housing already exists, this could work. A toolkit for local jurisdictions should be created to take measures to protect current renters that are most likely to be affected by dense transit-oriented development, the agencies working on the SW corridor have proposed land banking "naturally occurring" affordable multifamily rental housing. The second challenge is that if a city is rezoning an area to be in compliance with this bill, most would just rezone the entire area rather than go lot by lot and figure out if it's a rental or not. Perhaps the bill could include a "Right to Return" policy, that requires a comparable unit of the same rent be offered to the tenant after construction is complete. And have alongside it a requirement that the developer pay the tenants moving expenses. I believe such a policy would be very effective.

From a renter's perspective, an environmental perspective, and affordable housing professional's perspective, I think it's imperative for some version of SB 10 to be passed, I support SB-10 and urge you to approve it.

Sincerely,

Brandon Brezic
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