

Friends of Historic Albany

Albany, OR 97321

April 3rd, 2019

Senate Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources

900 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: Testimony from Friends of Historic Albany in Support of SB 927-3, the Public Participation and Preservation Act; and SB 929, the Preservation, Housing, and Seismic Safety Act

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

Advocacy and education are the core of the mission of Friends of Historic Albany (FOHA) and we support SB 927-3, the Public Participation and Preservation Act and SB 929, the Preservation, Housing and Seismic Safety Act.

Senate Bill 927-3: The Public Participation and Preservation Act

SB 927-3 will provide local governments with the much needed flexibility to align historic preservation with land use best practices creating a more balanced local historic resource program. This would bring Oregon up to speed with national best practices — along with Certified Local Government requirements — by removing owner consent as a way to veto local landmark designation. Currently, the owner consent provision has resulted in piecemealed historic preservation decisions and makes it challenging for communities to create a transparent, cohesive local historic preservation program.

SB 927-3 will allow communities to be selective in their historic designation process and tailor a preservation program to meet their goals rather than relying on solely on a building's or district's listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Historic protection decisions, like other land-use decisions, should adhere to the same criteria of land use planning and be completed through a formal public decision-making process. This change would encourage public engagement and allow community members to weigh in on decisions that are important to their individual community.

Senate Bill 929: The Preservation, Housing, and Seismic Safety Act

Like many smaller towns in Oregon, Albany has a rich inventory of historic commercial and residential structures but lacks the resources to protect and reuse these resources. Property owners are forced

to make financial decisions that oftentimes result in the demolition of a historic structures rather than restoring them, resulting in not only a social and cultural issue but an economic concern as well.

As stated by the National Trust for Historic Places, Oregon would be the first in the nation to encourage seismic retrofitting with the passage of SB929. Currently, thirty-five states invest in historic preservation through a tax credit resulting in an impressive leverage and substantial profit. SB 929 would create a financial tool that could easily be layered with other Oregon financial incentives resulting in a successful case study for the rest of the nation. For example, Historic Downtown Albany — which has seventy-nine contributing historic features — is located within an Urban Renewal Area and is also designated as one of the eighty-six Opportunity Zones in Oregon, if property owners in this area were to take advantage of the incentives offered here and couple them with SB 929, restoring historically significant structures would become not only achievable but desirable! Furthermore, SB 929 can be the catalyst Oregon needs to help property owners of historic buildings turn underutilized upper floor spaces into much needed housing units.

Like the vast majority of communities across Oregon, Albany's historic resources are under threat of deterioration and demolition; SB 927-3 and SB 929 would provide much needed resources to assist local governments and property owners in making historic preservation-minded decisions. FOHA urges you to vote yes on both of these bills.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Ziegler

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Board President, Friends of Historic Albany