

Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association

May 4, 2019

Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
900 Court Street NE, HR C
Salem, OR 97301 hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: Senate Bill 534

Dear Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer and Committee Members:

Thanks for considering our testimony.

Who Benefits? This bill is one of a pattern of bills advanced in the name of “housing production” and cleverly disguised as “needed housing”. In truth these are real estate redevelopment bills promoted by the homebuilders and their political allies who find it profitable to demolish viable older houses, avoid significant costs of permit fees, and add two houses priced \$750,000 and up.

The target. The bill is targeted at Portland lots scattered randomly around the city. Most are 25 foot wide lots that were historically bundled as 2 or more to meet local demand. The many lots in zones allowing 2500 SF lots will not be affected. “Remnant” lots where the original platted lot was enlarged or contracted leaving the original plat in place would also be indiscriminately recognized. Both types of lots exist in our early 20th century neighborhoods but never intended as single lots.

The History. HB 2007 in 20017 attempted the same impact. It was roundly defeated. In the early 2000s, there were bitterly fought battles over wholesale redevelopment allowed by such lots and regulations were subsequently implemented. Citizens and planners were very concerned about the low quality, cost, and inefficiency of these long skinny houses. Except where this density was encouraged by zoning, recognition of these lots was limited to lots where the land had been vacant for at least 5 years. This constrained wholesale redevelopment of viable and affordable housing and associated displacement. Such constraints should remain locally determined.

Needed Housing? Unless tied to subsidies insuring that replacement housing will be for low income buyers or renters this is not “needed housing”. Some have attempted to say that all housing is “needed”, but the market is telling us that this is not the case. And when families are displaced and no longer able to afford the older housing stock this new housing is not “needed” but wasteful, disruptive, displacement housing. *Fiscal impacts include costs legal, code writing and enforcement.*

Undermining SB 100. SB 534, along with Big Brother HB 2001, are direct attacks on town, city, and citizen participation in land use decisions. The bills are intended as an end run around requirement for “meaningful citizen participation”. Zoning by fiat by *1000 Friends* and *Up for Growth* among others casts legislators and state government in the role of local planning officials dictating code without process. This is a dangerous precedent for Oregon. Leave control of comprehensive planning and zoning in the hands of local government with oversight from LCDC.

A vote against SB 534 is vote for housing preservation and against developer interests.

With respect and appreciation,

Rod Merrick, AIA, Board President, Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association