
Ad Hoc UGB Expansions Won't Help Housing Affordability

HB 4095 would permit urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions at any time, in any city, and without any showing of a need for more land to accommodate housing. Under the bill, every city in the state could expand its UGB by 50 acres without following existing rules for UGB expansions that are designed to prevent sprawl, provide development with public services and facilities, and supply needed housing based on documented need.

- This concept conflates our state's real need for more affordable housing with a false need for more urban land. For example, the City of Bend expanded its UGB by over 2,000 acres in 2016. Little housing has so far been built on that land, largely because the City cannot afford to serve that land with infrastructure like transportation, sewer, and water. The existing UGB expansion process ensures that cities have enough land to accommodate growth. Providing more land will not result in affordable housing.
- Ad hoc UGB expansions that are exempt from compliance with all 19 statewide land use goals will lead to the conversion of working farm and forest lands to urban uses.
- The bill fails to define affordable housing. To help Oregon's most needy families, affordable housing should be affordable to families making 60% or less of area median income.
- The bill requires only 30 percent of development to be dedicated to affordable housing. If its intention is to provide affordable housing to Oregon's most needy families, then 100 percent of new housing should be affordable to families making 60% or less of area median income.
- Siting affordable housing on the outskirts of cities results in environmental injustice by burdening Oregon's most needy families with high transportation costs and lack of access to urban amenities and services.
- The bill does not limit the size of eligible cities. A small city expanding its UGB by 50 acres could more than double its size without any showing of need for land.
- The bill does not include any frequency restrictions, and would allow cities to expand by 50 acres over and over again without limitation. This would subvert the orderly, efficient, planned growth envisioned by Oregon's statewide land use planning, as cities would no longer follow the existing UGB expansion rules if ad hoc 50 acre expansions are available.

Oregon has an affordable housing crisis. Solving the crisis cannot be done through simply making more land available for sprawl onto rural lands. Rather, Oregon should require cities to provide housing that is truly affordable to Oregon's most needy families and not located on city outskirts.

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