

Submitter: Betsy Parry
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

In the rush to address the shortage of affordable housing, please don't sacrifice part of what makes Oregon, well, Oregon. Bypassing the UGB process via the -17 amendment would be extremely shortsighted when other options are before us, though they will take leadership. For years I have bragged about Oregon's State Land Use Planning Laws, and one of the main reasons is the foresight Oregon had to limit the unnecessary sprawl we see in other states. Oregon is a breath of fresh air in that regard. Don't open this door to allow Oregon to lose its character and become Anywheresville, USA. Although it is stated as a one-time bypass, we will not be able to un-do the undesirable consequences from this act of not looking before we leap. This action will be a wedge to further weaken the rules and make future bypasses easier. Is this the vision of the future landscape that you (or Oregonians as a whole) want to embrace?

The -17 amendment completely misses a very real problem that prevents more diverse housing options within the UGB - upgrading the infrastructure of our already urbanized areas so they can become attractive for development again. Our communities already have a backlog of needs for new and upgraded sewers, sidewalks, and more. We have collectively failed to invest in needed infrastructure to keep these areas thriving and occupied. Adding more land only exacerbates the infrastructure challenge.

We have underused land inside our UGBs that should be converted to housing. For example, currently, we have more parking spaces for cars than we have housing for people, yet we have vast areas of underused parking lots and strip malls. These underutilized spaces are liabilities that do not contribute to the economic nor physical health of our residents and cities. People are camping in derelict parking lots where instead they could be living in homes. We must make it easy to convert these areas to housing.

Making it easier to expand outward makes it harder to address climate change, reduce fire risk and to limit further habitat reduction for Oregon's native plants and wildlife. Paving over more lands, adding more roads, and expanding into the wildland-urban interface will only increase these problems.