

Submitter: Chris Beck
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

Dear House Rules Committee:

Consideration of sneaky last-minute efforts to undermine Oregon's land use system (-17 amendments) are unbecoming and are precisely what causes thoughtful Oregonians to have diminished views toward our Legislature. Oregon's land use system is one of the truly stellar policy features of our state and is emblematic of Oregon's culture of environmental protection. And the most important aspect of the land use system is our unique, and effective, UGB policy. Hasty action to revise Goal 14 policy should be avoided. Vote NO on the -17 amendments.

Ad hoc expansion of UGB's will have NO IMPACT on housing affordability. ZERO. NILL. We all know this, and yet, self-interested development interests continue to confuse legislators that UGBs are the problem. Non-strategic UGB expansions will only cause increased costs to the community via sprawl.

Housing affordability is complicated, but it will not be solved by merely paving over farmland willy nilly in cities and towns across the state in a non-strategic manner. There are thousands of acres of undeveloped and under-utilized properties within existing UGBs throughout the state, in the metro area, in the Valley, in Southern Oregon, the Coast, and even in Bend. Rezoning of these properties, along with other incentives, are a far better path to achieve affordability than the sloppy and frankly, lazy, approach typically proposed by the homebuilding industry, as is the case with the -17 amendments. And the lazy approach simply won't work. Never does.

UGB expansions hurt agriculture, timber production, and further marginalize grazing. UGB expansions are anti-rural. Urban legislators can show their support for rural economies by opposing the slip-shod approaches to land use envisioned in these amendments.

Sloppy and lazy expansions of UGBs are also counter to all of our desires to promote greater diversity and equity of opportunity in our communities. Most underserved Oregonians live in neighborhoods that need laser beam assistance and strategy to improve the quality of life and affordability of housing. Sprawling onto farmland is not going to automatically result in underserved populations gaining access to the new housing in these sprawl zones--it will only dilute resources cause local governments to avoid the needs of existing neighborhoods.

Please don't be fooled by false arguments around Urban Growth Boundaries. Creating affordable, vibrant, climate-friendly urban and town neighborhoods requires thought and strategy, collaboration with residents and industry, and more. But we can do it IF we do the work.

IF you want to spend the Interim studying Urban Growth Boundaries, then go for it. Maybe you all will learn something. Maybe you will find ways to improve how we adjust UGBs. Maybe you will gain a better understanding of out to infill in places where we have already invested billions of dollars in infrastructure. Maybe you will have a better understanding housing affordability complexities and how best to expand housing supply.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Beck
Unincorporated Multnomah County