



Hood River County Community Development

Planning, Building Codes, Code Compliance & GIS

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April 18, 2023

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Representative Dexter, Chair
Representative Gamba, Co-Vice Chair
Representative Helfrich, Co-Vice Chair

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 3197

Dear Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the Committee:

This letter is offered in support of House Bill 3197, which intends to clarify that discretionary review standards can be applied to residential development on rural lands outside of an urban growth boundary. Hood River County Community Development supports this bill and asks for the committee to advocate for its passage.

Traditionally, Oregon counties have relied on the use of discretionary standards and site-specific analysis to permit development, including housing in some zones, to ensure the protection of important natural resources, such as high value farm and forest lands, streams/floodplains, and wildlife habitat. Maintaining this option will ensure that counties can continue to allow residential development in rural areas, while concurrently maintaining significant resources worthy of protection.

As currently interpreted, ORS 197.307 creates an inherent conflict between Statewide Planning Goal 10 (Housing) and other important Goals. Many of the Goals that shape the rural planning program in Oregon necessarily rely on site-specific information and analysis to address standards like “minimizing adverse impacts” upon adjacent protected resources.

It is hard to see how HB 3197 creates barriers to housing production or eliminates the ability for jurisdictions to develop clear and objective standards to expedite housing approvals. Instead, it allows counties to maintain their focus on continuing to protect agricultural and forest uses and natural resources, while allowing for housing at a scale and intensity that is appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric D. Walker

Eric Walker, Director
Hood River County Community Development