

Submitter: Byron Caloz
On Behalf Of: myself
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

Greetings,

I come to you today to oppose HB3414. Infill in residential zones already has destroyed the character of communities where I live, in the St. Johns neighborhood of Portland. The only things saving some aspect of liveability in our neighborhoods are requirements to save trees, put in sidewalks, provide some on lot water filtering, set back requirements and other stylistic settings.

A good example of how these requirements can become a win-win for both developers, residents and the community is the house that was built next to mine on N. Heppner Avenue. The adjacent vacant lot was purchased and initially two 25 foot lots were to have unattached homes. That lot also had a relatively rare tree in the front setback area which would have to be cut down. Instead, the city asked the developer to preserve the tree and make the homes attached and increasing the front setback for the house in front of the tree. This broke up the facade for the attached homes, making it fit in better with the neighborhood and not creating a monolithic appearance which some attached houses present. Yes, this represented a delay in the project for the developer and possibly some extra expense, yet there was no loss for the developer and the tree became an extra selling point for the one home. The requirement did not stop the project. The community benefited.

With HB3414, you are taking away a city's efforts to make sure its developments contribute to the success of the community as a whole. Why? Because, supposedly, the governor and the bill's supporters want to increase residential housing. They feel that taking away requirements that increase liveability will increase affordable housing density. They get their feelings from developers who say they will not take on building projects unless they get larger profit margins. For developers, it is about increasing profits, not about the reduced quality of life for residents or the burden on utilities caused by poorly designed housing. Government is the only protector of community and if this bill were to pass it would mean giving up that role.

There are other ways to increase residential housing without giving up on the qualities needed in urban communities. I urge you to not accept this legislation and take a closer look at how to balance liveability with increased density.

Thank you for reading my testimony.