

Submitter: Victoria Demchak
On Behalf Of: myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB4026

Dear Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp and Members of the Senate Rules Committee,

My name is Victoria Demchak. I live just to the east of North Plains. My family has a CSA vegetable farm with one of the largest CSA memberships in Oregon. North Plains is a neighbor and a source of friendship, restaurant food and parks. Please take a journey with me.

Consider that you live in or near a small city with aspirations. The energy of those aspirations offers excitement and vibrancy. A small city in a rural area, maybe this city will take a path like Carlton, Dundee, even Philomath. These cities have similarities: vibrant rural areas, land-based businesses, attractive nearby destinations and significant job centers in nearby cities.

The possibilities are invigorating. This could be helpful to future growth and investment while sustaining its culture. Maybe local farms, wineries, and producers can be part of this. Maybe we could develop a shared vision and consider the various options that are available to such a well-placed city that is blessed with natural fertility and beauty, such as greater density, upzoning, and abundant housing choices at a range of price points.

But instead, public engagement is cursory and short with only two properly noticed meetings to share this with the public. Images and proposals are not shared at any of the big celebrations within North Plains and aren't posted in public buildings until the city's ordinance is approved by city council. A vision of being "like North Hillsboro" is shared to provide clarity for the proposed 688 acre expansion for industrial areas. North Hillsboro has a mixture of strip malls, Amazon warehouses, and a long avenue of newly built data centers near some long-term employers like Genentech and hightech industry suppliers. The 6-8 lane arterials dwarf nearby Highway 26. A city of this size with so much industrial land would not look like any existing Oregon city.

What should we do to respond to this lack of engagement? In a state with profound public engagement responsibilities built into the UGB work and enshrined in the state constitution, it seems like there should be options for early redress to redirect, to develop a shared vision and proposals and to repurpose supporting documentation appropriately.

We must turn back to strong and clear information sharing that focuses on the decision and its scale.

And this bill strikes at a key question: Do voters have a right to reprimand single ordinances that use local legislative authority to determine a vision? Not administrative actions, but this power to choose, from the universe of choices, a decision. Much like your power as legislators here, today.

Our constitution offers that we can. LC's opinions offer the clarity that if this tactic is allowable, it is enshrined through our constitution. We do not change the state constitution on a whim – and we do not change it through legislative bills.

I ask for you to respect this right and to commit to providing for the land use system in ways that support citizen engagement and city success. Without both, neither our expansions nor our implementation will be successful.

Thank you,
Victoria Demchak