

Submitter: Rick Michaelson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I have spent the last 40 years doing small scale neighborhood-based development projects in Portland. Some of them have been historic properties, some not. While I am a strong supporter of middle housing, I am opposed to HB2138 unless Section 22(1)(f) (Repealing requirements for demolition review for houses listed in the National Register of Historic Places.") is removed. This section has absolutely nothing to do with creating the middle housing that was put into effect just a few years ago to after a long and wide-ranging discussion in order to improve implementation of Goal 5.

Eliminating demolition review for National Register properties would remove one of the few incentives Oregon offers to protect our history and it would have a tiny, almost unmeasurable impact on creating additional housing opportunities. The approximately 10,000 National Register listed dwellings in Oregon are about one half of one percent of all the housing units in Oregon. Their demolition and replacement would simply not move the needle in creating the housing supply we need.

In addition, demolition review is part of the deal between the government and Oregon owners of National Register properties. If the owner goes to the trouble of putting their home on the Register, an arduous process with few financial benefits, then the government will help ensure their preservation in the future. Remember, placing a house on the National Register can not be done without owner approval or, in the case of a National Register District, a majority of the homeowners in the District. To remove the demolition review provision from existing National Register Properties is simply breaking a promise to those homeowners.

I have been involved in several demolition review cases. Some have led to demolitions; others have not. However, all have led to a better understanding of Oregon's history and values, and our community is better off for having those conversations.