

Submitter: Constance Beaumont

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I support the affordable housing goals of HB 2138, but strongly oppose Section 22(1)(f) and recommend that it be removed from the bill.

Section 22(1)(f) would require the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission to repeal requirements for demolition review for houses in historic districts that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Reasons to Remove Section 22(1)(f):

- Current law already allows the approval of historic building demolitions in National Register districts if a demolition will yield more affordable dwelling units than would result from a structure's preservation.
- Section 22(1)(f) would allow historic homes that are demolished to be replaced by significantly more expensive houses that not only clash with their surroundings but that are also likely to undercut climate-related goals.

I support the goal of increasing affordable housing and favor:

- incentives for adapting existing residential homes to multi-unit housing in non-contributing properties; and
- Accessory Dwelling Units and middle housing that is pedestrian-friendly and compatible with its surroundings.

But I believe that, as written, HB 2138 – especially Section 22(1)(f) – would:

- trigger the substitution of more expensive homes for less expensive ones,
- facilitate the destruction of widely valued historic resources that often increase tourism, which in turn helps local economies, and
- blow the opportunity to advance the goal of reducing carbon emissions that cause climate change.

Regarding the last point – climate change – the state should:

- require (or at least encourage) new construction to be designed to be pedestrian-friendly, so that people will be motivated to take more trips by foot than by carbon-emitting cars (note: a defining characteristic of many historic districts is their pedestrian-friendliness, which makes walking distances seem shorter); and
- minimize demolitions that cause thousands of tons of old-growth materials to be sent to landfills and often reduce the urban tree canopy.

Consider these words from Sustainable Transportation Planning: Tools for Creating Vibrant, Healthy and Resilient Communities, a book by Jeffrey Tumlin, recent transportation director of San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency:

- o "...sustainability is not just about emissions figures and energy cycles, it is also about human feelings...Beauty is more fundamental to sustainability than alternative-energy investments...If something is beautiful, we will cherish it, maintain it, and continue to improve upon it. Maintaining and improving what you already have

is almost always more sustainable than building something new.”