

Submitter: Barbara Mencer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I am writing to express our concerns regarding HB2138. While acknowledge the pressing need for affordable housing, I believe that high-density developments, as proposed, could adversely affect existing communities.

I reside in North Albany, Benton County, within Albany's city limits. This area comprises small neighborhoods connected by residential streets. Many older neighborhoods feature narrow roads with limited or no street parking and lack sidewalks. Access to and from North Albany, as well as to Corvallis and other communities, primarily relies on Highway 20 and a two-lane bridge.

In recent years, North Albany has experienced significant growth. Numerous acres of farmland and natural areas have been converted into housing developments, leading to a substantial increase in population. Since the enactment of HB 2001 in 2019, lots previously zoned for single-family homes are now accommodating up to four units. For instance, a development initially planned for 22 units is now being constructed with 80 units. This escalation places considerable strain on infrastructure and schools.

The proposed bill could compromise the safety and livability of areas like ours. Without proper planning and development of essential infrastructure—such as street improvements, sidewalks, and enhanced access to law enforcement and emergency services—the community's well-being is at risk.

Every afternoon at approximately 4 pm, schoolchildren are leaving schools, high school students are returning home from Albany, and adults are commuting from various directions. With access limited to two one-way bridges, traffic becomes congested, leading to driver frustration. Amidst this, children attempt to cross streets, bicyclists navigate the roads, and in the event of an accident or emergency, law enforcement, fire trucks, and ambulances struggle to penetrate the gridlock. This scenario underscores the potential hazards of increased density without corresponding infrastructure enhancements.

While I recognize the necessity for additional housing to accommodate the growing population, it is imperative to address livability concerns concurrently. This includes:

- Street improvements
- Parks
- Sidewalks
- Emergency services

- Schools

To ensure public safety and community well-being, we respectfully request the following considerations:

1. Clarify that middle housing is intended for infill into lots that existed at the time HB 2001 was enacted (or by June 30, 2021), rather than permitting such developments on undeveloped greenfields.
2. Empower cities to deny middle housing applications based on inadequate infrastructure.
3. Incorporate provisions from HB 3847 to allocate funding for infrastructure related to middle housing.
4. Expand the notification radius for neighboring properties, as proposed in SB 737.

Thank you.

Barbara Mencer