

March 19, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Senate Bill 974 - Oppose

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 974, which would impose unworkable and arbitrary timelines on the processing of land use applications.

Multnomah County's 2025 State Legislative Agenda emphasizes the importance of continuing local control of land use and zoning. Senate Bill 974 severely impacts the county's land use decision-making authority and adds additional burdens for land use planners by shortening the time frame for ensuring applications comply with state and local law.

The 45-day approval requirement for applications is unworkable, especially in rural areas where many environmental and safety standards may apply. Assuming a planner could begin processing it on day one, 45 days just about covers the time to mail a notice and receive comments for 14 days then a few days to write and mail a decision that then begins the 14 appeal period, therefore not really leaving any time if an appeal *is* received, which in turn requires additional notice and a hearing date set. The 45-day requirement for housing will necessarily bump other permit reviews that are not for housing even if those permits were submitted first.

Additionally, Section 10 of the bill requires the losing party in a Land Use Board of Appeals case on these housing decisions to pay the prevailing party's legal fees. This discourages people from challenging those decisions, which goes against the purpose of Goal 1 to encourage public participation in the land use planning process.

In short, SB 974 imposes a strict burden on local land use planning departments that cannot currently afford to add more staff to meet the proposed timelines.

Sincerely,

Tom Powers

Government Relations

Submitted by Tom Powers, Multnomah County Government Relations
tom.powers@multco.us (503) 348-2021