

Mayor
Honorable Tom Ellis



City Manager
Jason A. Tuck, ICMA-CM

March 14, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 974-1

Dear Chair Pham and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Council of the City of Happy Valley, I would like to express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 974-1 as it is proposed. We understand the sponsors' goal to provide plentiful and affordable housing, and we share that goal. We are leading many projects to try to achieve that goal and as a builder myself I appreciate the sentiment to speed the time of review. But this bill is just another of many bills we have seen this year that add unnecessary complexity and fails to acknowledge unintended consequences.

The redefinition and expansion of a "limited land use decision" has far-reaching impacts and unworkable effects. The listed time limitations are insufficient for engineering review or the appeal process, and effectively remove the ability of cities to self-govern. Prohibiting design reviews has larger impacts than just accelerating development: it will degrade the ability of cities to provide the infrastructure needed to support development, and will interfere with the ability of communities to shape their own neighborhoods.

We would ask that the legislature work with cities to understand the current rules and processes prior to new legislation. The most effective tool in supporting faster housing development is to provide funding for infrastructure projects like potable water supply, sewage and stormwater, and roadways. The City of Happy Valley has ample space for housing and development but the cost of infrastructure is the true barrier to making housing developments viable.

You have already passed many bills over the past few years that cities like Happy Valley are still trying to catch up to and understanding the existing processes as well as how new changes are affected by other recent legislation is critical. We are passing ordinances, we are changing policies, but the constant onslaught of new state mandates is burying us. The state has implemented new systems already, please let them work. You already formed the Housing Accountability and Production Office to assure that cities like Happy Valley are removing barriers to housing. We are actively working to achieve the goal that you want. It does not help us when every year you change the rules we are operating under.

I ask you to give time for the current systems to work and to allow local jurisdictions to manage housing options. We have limited resources, and we would like the opportunity to use them to make housing more available, rather than chase the latest administrative overhaul.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Ellis', written in a cursive style.

Tom Ellis
Mayor

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