



April 29, 2025

Hon. Mark Meek, Chair
Hon. Mike McLane, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Oregon Legislature
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SUPPORT HB 3190A - Special Assessment for Historic Commercial Properties

Dear Chair Meek, Vice Chair McLane, and Committee Members,

As Oregon's only statewide non-profit historic preservation organization, Restore Oregon works with thousands of people to reimagine and transform their communities through the preservation and reuse of historic and cultural places. Our mission is to provide a vibrant and equitable Oregon where historic preservation and reuse are crucial to solving problems like our struggling downtowns or the housing crisis. By helping our fellow citizens preserve our state's unique assets, we help celebrate and promote Oregon's heritage. **We enthusiastically support HB 3190A**, which reauthorizes a version of Oregon's longtime Special Assessment for Historic Properties program. The program will help many struggling, vacant, or underutilized commercial properties in every community in our state.



For example (above) from left to right: Buchanan Cellars in McMinnville and the Haskell Building in Baker City are just starting or are in progress of preservation. The recently completed Fork Forty project in Salem created a food hub *and* reestablished new housing units on the second floor. And in Portland, a long-vacant commercial building was transformed into the Hotel Grand Stark. All of these properties are enrolled in the earlier version of Special Assessment program that expired last June.

This bill will re-enact and bring back the program, specifically for commercial property owners, that helps invest in our state's historic properties and ensure they are renovated and maintained responsibly. It would offer commercial properties a specially assessed value (calculated by the county assessor) for a ten-year benefit term in exchange for making appropriate improvements to the historic property. The program would be administered by the Oregon Historic Preservation Office, a division of Oregon Parks and Recreation, which can readily administer this new version as it is still managing the former program's enrolled properties.

Just when our main streets, commercial corridors, and downtowns across the state need an infusion of support and financial investment, HB 3190A can play a crucial role in helping to invest in and revitalize these properties. And, it also aligns with and helps leverage existing state programs like the Main Street Revitalization grant fund. It would provide a long-term incentive as the benefit period is over ten years, an essential stabilizing benefit for our downtowns. HB 3190A could help spur increased housing production, specifically in the underutilized and vacant upper floors of commercial buildings.

Once this program is available again, many more commercial properties would benefit. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for considering Restore Oregon's input. We urge you to support HB 3190A.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicole Possert".

Nicole Possert
Executive Director