



NEWPORT OREGON

May 7, 2025

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Opposition to SB974 and request for further study

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in opposition to adopting SB974 during the current legislative session. My city, along with the six other cities in Lincoln County, have worked collaboratively over the past 2 ½ years to develop all levels of needed housing, exceeding state goals in doing so. In Newport, our Community Development and Engineering Departments work collaboratively with developers proposing new housing to troubleshoot and solve issues arising through the approval process, while also constantly working to open up new pathways to develop more housing. We are committed to developing the housing needed in our community as evidenced in our Housing Production Strategy. While we absolutely agree with the intent of this bill, there does not exist clear evidence that the bill will result in better outcomes or more housing. Spending more time researching the actions that cause delays, and best practices to resolve them, will create a better solution and help to truly align state and local approaches.

I will highlight three specific sections of the bill which could be strengthened to allow communities our size to continue to improve its housing needs. These each have the potential to delay building and/or create adverse unintended consequences:

- **Section 2 – Financial Penalty vs. Writ of Mandamus**

Instead of imposing severe financial penalties on cities for missing plan review deadlines, a developer should be able to use a writ of mandamus (a court order compelling government action). Monetary awards should go to the prevailing party and be limited to attorney fees. The proposed penalties, which include a developer's attorney fees and engineering costs, would be a huge financial risk that would force cities like Newport to be more rigid and cautious during reviews, slowing collaboration and housing production.





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- **Section 3(21)(a)(A) – Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

Comprehensive plan or zoning map changes should not be subject to expedited review. These types of changes can significantly impact the permissible scale of development, required infrastructure, and community character. A slower, public process is essential to allow careful consideration and community input.

- **Section 4(5) – Design Review Waivers**

Removing design standards does not align with the bill's goal of speeding up plan reviews. Local governments already provide clear, objective design standards for quick approvals. Eliminating these standards could harm neighborhood quality without speeding up development.

I respectfully ask that you consider the potential negative impacts these areas of SB974 could have on communities such as Newport, and the progress we have made in housing development. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jan Kaplan
Mayor, City of Newport

