



March 21, 2023

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
Oregon Legislature  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: SUPPORT SB 919 -1 Amendment**

Dear Chair Jama and Committee Members,

As Oregon's only statewide non-profit historic preservation organization, Restore Oregon works with thousands of people across the state each year to preserve, reuse, and pass forward the historic places and spaces that embody Oregon's diverse cultural heritage. By helping our fellow citizens preserve our state's unique built, natural and cultural environments, we help celebrate and promote much of what makes Oregon special.

Thank you for your leadership and would like to express our **support for SB 919 -1**, which recognizes the role that existing properties can play in creating housing, either by the construction of an additional accessory dwelling unit (ADU) OR the conversion of an existing single-family dwelling into multiple units. Restore Oregon would ask that if the State must prioritize the property tax incentive's availability, it would first and foremost be granted to ADU's constructed on properties with an existing single-family dwelling, not an undeveloped property.

The property tax exemption for up to five years is a necessary incentive to expeditiously bring more housing online as an important strategy to utilize our existing built environment to help the state's housing crisis.

**Financial incentives, like this five-year property tax exemption, are essential to increase housing stock, will work against displacement of long-time property owners, and reduce the carbon costs associated with demolition and new construction.**

In its Oregon Housing Needs Recommendation Report presented to the Oregon Legislature in December of 2022, the Land Conservation and Development Department acknowledged the need to support affordability and promote housing stability through the preservation of the existing housing supply, especially "naturally-occurring affordable housing" – housing that is relatively affordable without subsidy. Examples of this might include:

- converting existing houses to multiple unit housing (internal conversions)

- constructing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) middle housing (duplex, triplex, quadplex or cottage clusters) while retaining the existing structure
- restoring and revitalizing vacant housing units on 2<sup>nd</sup>/upper stories of older mixed use commercial buildings

**In most cases, the least expensive housing will often be the structure that is already standing.** This -1 amendment addresses utilizing that existing infrastructure for a new ADU added to the lot of an existing primary residence or the conversion of a single-family residence into a duplex, triplex or quadplex.

The embodied energy in existing structures is substantial, and every time we send a serviceable building to the landfill, we are incurring a carbon debt which must be amortized. The value of existing structures is immense since they do not require the extraction of virgin resources to produce, and the added energy efficiency of a new building typically takes many decades to break even when we account for the CO2 associated with demolition of the existing structure and the use of raw materials to build the new one. Recently, Architecture 2030 produced the [CARE \(Carbon Avoided: Retrofit Estimator\) Tool](#), which quantifies the avoided carbon impacts and benefits of reusing and upgrading existing buildings at a project scale. This demonstrated reduction in carbon costs is yet another solid policy to support the financial incentive of this property tax exemption.

It will take multiple and diverse strategies to address the need for housing in Oregon. **Re-using and adapting existing buildings, as well as building new, must be part of this strategy.** Ultimately, people who need a roof will not care if that roof is old or new, so long as the roof continues to provide shelter from the rain.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 919 -1 and for taking Restore Oregon's comments into consideration.



Nicole Possert  
Executive Director