

Submitter: Glenn Lancaster
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3499

To the House Committee on Rules:

I am writing in strong support of HB 3499, and I appreciate Representative Christine Drazan's leadership in bringing forward this important legislation.

Urban Renewal (UR) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) have become widely used tools for financing city development projects. While they can support revitalization, they often come at a steep and under-discussed cost to the public.

When UR is used, future property tax growth is diverted—sometimes for 30 to 40 years—away from essential public services. This includes funding for schools, police, fire and rescue, libraries, parks, and general municipal operations. The dollars that would normally support the growing needs of a community are instead locked into repaying debt or financing redevelopment projects, often led by consultants or out-of-area developers.

In many cases, the public is never given a binding vote on whether they agree to these long-term commitments. Plans are adopted, amended, and expanded without requiring direct voter approval—even when the financial obligations span generations.

The use of UR also includes:

Interest on borrowed money (which can double the cost of the project over time)

Administrative expenses

Contingency reserves

And in some cases, direct subsidies to private development

This means a significant share of UR tax revenue never goes toward building sidewalks or improving public spaces—it goes to financing structures, servicing debt, and overhead.

This bill—HB 3499—addresses this lack of accountability by requiring that any new Urban Renewal plan, or any substantial amendment to an existing plan, must be approved by a majority of voters. That ensures transparency, builds public trust, and respects the people who are ultimately responsible for repaying these obligations—

whether directly through taxes or indirectly through reduced services.

This is not a radical reform. It's a necessary one. If a city believes in the value of its plan, it should have no hesitation in letting the public decide. Binding voter approval is a basic safeguard that strengthens—not weakens—responsible planning.

I urge the committee to support HB 3499 and protect the public's right to approve the long-term financial decisions made in their name. My email address is on file.

Respectfully,
Glenn Lancaster
Wilsonville Resident