

Submitter: Jonathan Pincus  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

Dear Legislators:

Normally I would be in favor of this bill. However, as written, it contains a clause which would eliminate the review process used by many Oregon jurisdictions for properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Doing so would eliminate the one remaining "protection" for above ground cultural resources available to communities who wish to preserve their cultural heritage or the cultural heritage of communities which have previously occupied an area. The inclusion of this draconian measure in the bill indicates that the bill's writers are not fully informed about how historic preservation works in relation to development in most Oregon municipalities.

Demolition review for National Register properties does not conflict with efforts to increase housing availability in our state. The review process targeted for elimination does not prevent property owners from demolishing or modifying their historic property. Instead, the review provides an opportunity for the community to develop alternatives, identify applicable resources and discuss significance prior to demolition. At the conclusion of the review the property owner or developer still has the ability to demolish, remove, modify or reuse the historic resources on their property. I have seen the review process serve to convince owners and developers to retain their historic properties, integrate them into their developments or allow them to be moved or carefully salvaged. These types of positive outcomes would not have occurred without the opportunity the review process provides.

If we were to add up all of the acreage in Oregon that is occupied by a National Register property and compare that sum to the acreage currently available for housing development

in Oregon we would find that the acreage occupied by National Register properties is minuscule by comparison. I have worked as a design consultant in Oregon for over forty years have never seen a housing proposal prevented from going forward as a result of application of the special review process, which typically occurs concurrently with the required planning and code review processes. What I have often seen, however, is developers, communities and design professionals get creative and incorporate their existing cultural resources into their designs when informed by the review process. I believe our communities can provide as much additional housing as the either market or funding will support without eliminating this non-binding method of enabling the possibilities of incorporating, otherwise preserving or at least documenting cultural resources that have been found to be significant by Department

of Interior, prior to demolition. The notion that the review process in question is a significant impediment to housing development is a somewhat antique and quite inaccurate notion.

I encourage you amend the bill being reviewed to remove the wording which requires the elimination of the special review process for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. By doing so you will be forwarding a bill that all Oregonians can support.

Thank you for your consideration,  
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