

March 26, 2025

Honorable Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Anderson, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson,
and members of the House Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Strong Support for HB 2647-3 – Monmouth UGB Land Exchange

Dear Legislative Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for **HB 2647-3**. It addresses Monmouth's critical housing shortage by facilitating a UGB land exchange. It will enable responsible residential development while preserving environmentally sensitive land.

I have served my city in a variety of capacities over the past 25 years including: 5 years as a Planning Commissioner including 2 1/2 years as chair; Mayor for a decade; City Councilor for 5 years. Throughout this service I have called for action to address Monmouth's shortage of land one could actually build housing on. **This situation has now become a crisis.**

Monmouth, population about 11,000 has **fewer than 10 serviceable lots** currently available. Monmouth's decades-old UGB, the boundaries of which were determined by land-use statutes in force at the time it was created, unavoidably included areas that are precluded from development due to flood hazards, infrastructure limitations, and unwilling landowners; truly developable land was mostly excluded.

Nothing about this situation has changed during my 25-year involvement in local governance. Monmouth has an ongoing housing crisis, one which has worsened each passing year. We are now the **8th most rent-burdened city in Oregon**; residents struggle to find affordable housing. (At the 2010 census, Monmouth was also the **most densely settled city** in the state. We are not profligate in our land use.)

The traditional UGB adjustment process is costly and time-consuming, often taking years and requiring significant expenditures with no guarantee of success. Unfortunately, the "Alternative UGB Land Exchange" process authorized by SB 1537 (2024) is not applicable to Monmouth.

HB 2647-3, an extension of the principles of SB 1537, presents a **thoughtful and effective approach** to addressing Monmouth's urgent housing crisis while prioritizing environmental sustainability. **We would like to do our part to resolve Oregon's statewide housing shortage.** Please support and urge passage of this legislation.

HB 2647-3 facilitates a UGB land swap by:

- Removing 90 acres of land that are **environmentally sensitive (ie: wetlands) and difficult and expensive to service**, and which are **unavailable for development**.
- Adding 75 acres of land that are **free from environmental constraints, have infrastructure readily available** to support housing development, and the owner of which is **willing to develop**.

This legislation directly benefits the public by:

- **Opening to development 75 acres designated for middle housing**, meeting community needs.
- **Reducing development costs**, by providing land easily serviced by city utilities and our transportation system.
- **Preserving wetlands, flood zones, and wildlife corridors** present on the excluded acreage, ensuring environmental protection and responsible land use.

Thank you for the hard work you do. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Monmouth City Councilor John Oberst

503-917-1702