

Submitter: Randy Gragg
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB974

Greetings,

I oppose the elimination of Design Review as proposed in the SB974 –1 Amendment “Section 12 (5)” on page 10 and “Section 13 (5)” on page 11.

For 17 years I covered Portland design review for The Oregonian and have continued to watch it evolve as an observer and occasional participant. I've heard all the kvetching about DR being an impediment to faster permitting. I've also watched responsible, competent architects and developers breeze through it, often welcoming the feedback.

I would encourage you to consider WHO does the most complaining and who is lobbying the hardest: developers and paid lobbyists. I would also encourage you to listen to architects who understand the process and recognize its benefits, to their projects and to the community. Few would argue that DR did anything but improve their projects.

I fully recognize that we are in a housing crisis, but eliminating DR will only lead to developers cutting every conceivable corner to deliver substandard projects that will not stand the test of time. We'll look back mournfully as the buildings shaped solely by developers' opinions and cost-cutting stand out now, and then degrade as they are sold, leak, and rot. Poorly designed and built buildings require more maintenance. Extremely few developers build to hold their projects. They build and sell.

Design Review in Portland underwent an administrative and legislative overhaul (DOZA) in Summer of 2021, investing significant resources, to streamline the process and make it more predictable for investors.

And frankly, this is a local control issue. Yes, the state provides some funds, but far from enough to justify micro-managing policies. Design Review in Portland supports the goals and policies of Portland's Comprehensive Plan, specifically Goals 3 and 4 which require the creation of complete, healthy and well-connected neighborhoods. Extensive local public involvement shaped these policies. Let us build to last rather than empowering blow-and-go development that won't serve anyone's longterm goals.

thank you,
Randy Gragg