

Submitter: Steven Hickman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB974

As both a resident of Newport and a Newport City Councilor, I am very much in favor of reducing barriers and hindrances to developing more housing in our state. The burden put on developers by legislation, ordinances and other restrictions is enormous and I applaud the sponsors of this bill for trying to find ways to make the whole process less onerous and far more successful in providing safe and affordable housing for Oregonians.

However, I take issue with this particular "shot clock" approach to try and speed a very complex and nuanced process. By artificially imposing a timeline on such a process without addressing the various factors at work in the permitting and approval process, this bill threatens to put cities in the untenable position of having to allow plans to be implemented without being properly vetted or investigated carefully for negative impacts, public safety impact and other potential outcomes that could not only harm citizens but also open those cities to costly legal liability action.

I believe the more conservative approach would be to review the entire process to identify what factors and/or legislation has burdened this entire process from start to finish so that cities are able to more expediently address each application by removing unnecessary or excessive restrictions or procedures, rather than simply limiting the amount of time that already over-burdened city planning departments have to process and approve applications.

We all want more housing in Oregon and we believe that a thorough review of all the factors first, is wisest. After such a review, then ALSO implementing a "shot clock" makes some sense, but acting impulsively to simply impose limits on a burdensome process is likely to cause more problems than it solves.