

Submitter: Jake Austin

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure: HB3414

It has been brought to my attention by Restore Oregon that HB 3414 "would allow developers to bypass city codes and processes in place to protect our built and natural resources, including regulations governing the alteration of landmark properties and new construction in designated districts, without demanding any increased density or level of affordability."

While I am all for making it easier and quicker to build the housing that Oregon needs, we need to take a step back and examine why local government codes were created in the first place. The majority of codes have legitimate reasons and create protections for good neighborhood building practices and can (and should) include protections for historic buildings, properties, landmarks and districts. Do city and local codes/processes slow down the construction of new housing? Yes. However, fast housing does not make good housing, especially long term.

Both Portland and Oregon as a whole is a unique place full of distinct regions and neighborhoods. Allowing the practice of bypassing local building codes simply to incentivize contractors to build lots of housing fast doesn't make much sense. This will erode at what makes our area unique by allowing "fast and loose" building with out much regard to the context of where we are building new housing and what that new housing looks like and likely no regard to historical properties. Portland has already lost so many historical properties to simply not caring about our past.

Yes, we can certainly build more housing, and that will allow for more affordability than we have now, however if we just rush in and try to build however, wherever, we are really going to be shooting ourselves in the foot by not creating a smart housing plan that will stand the test of time. This is a great time to take a step back and look at how we can incorporate new housing into what we already have. Blend older, existing housing with new construction that complements its surroundings. Create a smart housing plan that really considers the area that this housing is being built. Yes, this will take much more effort than simply waving the need to follow local codes, but just makes so much more sense. That will allow for housing that not only meets today's needs, but needs for years to come without destroying the integrity of our neighborhoods we love. HB 3414 as written would certainly destroy the integrity of our neighborhoods and would not be good for Oregon long term. Now is the time to be smart about our housing choices as once things get built with these "fast and loose" rules it becomes extremely difficult and extremely expensive to fix in the future.

Please edit or shelve HB 3414 as it is not what Oregon needs in housing policy.