



Tonya Graham, Mayor

March 6, 2025

Dear Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

I am writing to share my concerns about HB49-1. While well-intentioned, this bill does not serve communities, like Ashland, that see the availability of affordable and workforce accessible housing as a key driver of economic health and community wellbeing and are working hard to ensure that more such housing is developed.

Specifically, by imposing uniform zoning standards, SB 49-1 would adversely affect Ashland's strategies for promoting/requiring affordable housing through annexations and zone changes. The bill's broad definition of inclusionary zoning would limit the city's ability to implement policies that address specific local housing challenges effectively.

The bill requires that before imposing any affordability requirements, such as inclusionary zoning or affordability conditions in annexations, local governments must evaluate the impact on housing costs. This provision suggests that any policy requiring a percentage of new housing to be affordable must be backed by evidence demonstrating that it does not unreasonably increase overall development costs. This requirement will create additional hurdles for Ashland, as it will necessitate commissioning studies to justify existing or future affordability mandates, delaying implementation and adding costs to policy development.

In practical terms, if Ashland wants to continue requiring affordable housing through annexations or zoning changes, the City would need to pair such requirements with significant financial or regulatory incentives, such as tax abatements, fee waivers, or density bonuses, to mitigate potential cost burdens on developers. Given the many strains on local government resources, this requirement will simply mean that the City of Ashland will lose its ability to require affordable housing through annexations or zone changes. We simply do not have the resources to provide such incentives. We currently have an effective inclusionary zoning ordinance, but this bill will eliminate it as a tool.

The bill mandates that cities with populations of 10,000 or greater eliminate minimum density standards for all developed residential lands, except where necessary to prevent the reduction of existing housing units. This change will lead to lower-

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density developments, negatively affecting land use efficiency and the availability of affordable housing options in Ashland. In Ashland, the price of land is a key obstacle to the development of affordable and workforce housing, so increasing density is another crucial tool we use. Ashland passed minimum density requirements explicitly to ensure needed housing was built and that the land zoned for multifamily was used efficiently.

Lastly, Oregon's Statewide Land Use Goals identify public involvement as a foundational principle under Goal 1. The replacement of locally developed ordinances, crafted through robust public engagement processes, with statewide model codes seems to contradict this goal. Such a shift would weaken the role of public input in shaping regulations that reflect the unique characteristics and needs of individual communities and prevent communities, like Ashland, from creating housing solutions that match their unique circumstances.

I urge you to oppose SB49-1 as it will erode local control, undermine public involvement in land use decisions and local legislative processes, and negatively impact our ability to implement affordable housing policies tailored to Ashland's unique needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tonya Graham".

Tonya Graham
Mayor