

Submitter: Stephanie Coopman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

Remove Section 22(1)(f) from this bill: "Repealing requirements for demolition review for houses listed in the National Register of Historic Places."

Oregon has over 138 National Register Historic Districts and thousands of designated homes across the state. So this section of the bill, if retained, would greatly impact these historic places, potentially leading to unrestricted demolition. This new rule would eliminate the minimal protection of a process that is designed to review and balance the needs of local communities and their historic homes and places.

- Demolition review does NOT equal automatic demolition denial. It is a weighing of the public benefit of retention vs replacement.
- Demolition review is the only protection offered in Oregon - to remove it will nullify Oregon's Land Use Goal 5 for historic resources.
- Removing demolition review denies the public a voice (counter to Land Use Goal 1). The community or stakeholder group should have an opportunity to weigh in on places that matter to them and reflect their heritage. Should the developer be the only voice?
- Demolition is forever and more demolition works against the state's climate goals
- The demolition review process has been shown to balance the public benefit and often has helped create more housing rather than preventing it.
- As written, Section 22(1)(f) has no requirement that middle housing or affordable housing replace the demolished historic structure. It has NO connection to the bill's goal.
- Historic designation requires rigorous research and vetting to prove cultural significance. They should not be erased without careful consideration.
- No protection + no restoration and reuse incentives = Oregon dead last in the U.S. for stewardship of its heritage places.
- How can we move the needle for increased housing in heritage areas? Create a better inclusive "both-and" strategy that would add more units within designated historic areas through an incentive package for adapting existing residential, add ADUs, add triplexes on non-contributing properties, etc.

Finally, HB 2138 is an anti-democratic move by the state to remove land-use decisions from local residents and local governments. This bill only appears to be doing something when in fact it does nothing to create affordable housing. To create affordable housing, the state must commit the funds to do so.