

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

I oppose the adoption of HB 2138-1 in its current form, because one section deals with a topic unrelated to the overall bill's intent. I support the general objective of the bill to create more middle housing. However, Section 22 (1) (f), which prohibits demolition review for contributing buildings in Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places, should be removed.

At present, demolition review is the only state-mandated protection for historic/cultural landmarks. It does not guarantee preservation. The current state process requires that demolition review consider the historic value in relation to other goals of state land use planning. It only requires careful consideration of a proposal and its benefits. The provisions of Section 22 (1) (f) would eliminate that care.

The Buck-Prager Building, a contributing building in Northwest Portland's Alphabet Historic District, illustrates the importance of careful examination for both historic/cultural preservation and for housing goals. The original development proposal called for the demolition of the building and the construction of market-rate apartments on the site and the two adjacent parcels on each side of the building. When the Landmarks Commission and then the City Council considered the demolition request, the subject of affordability was discussed and the project proposer would not commit to affordability. As a result, the Council denied the request for demolition. Later, a new development proposal was advanced, which maintained the building and included construction of two new buildings on the adjacent lots for a total of 148 units of affordable housing. As a result, Portland got substantially more units, affordability and historic/cultural preservation all in one package.

If Section 22(1) (f) had been in place at the time of the initial city review, this opportunity to serve multiple goals would have been lost. I ask the committee to remove that section of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,