



GORGEFRIENDS.ORG

March 17, 2025

RE: SB 974 – OPPOSE

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Committee Members:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (“Friends”) is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (“Gorge” or “National Scenic Area”).

Friends opposes SB 974 and the -1s as written. SB 974 would largely maintain the *status quo* 150-day deadline for counties to issue land use decisions and the 120-day deadline for cities. It would also retain the 100-day deadline for affordable multifamily housing. However, **SB 974 would move single-family housing to the front of the land use application line and prioritize it before all other types of development—including affordable multifamily housing**—with a 45-day deadline. While builders of single-family housing would, no doubt, welcome this, SB 974 would put great pressure on local governments to rubber stamp single-family housing to get them out of the pipeline so that they could then process the types of applications disfavored by this bill (i.e., everything but single-family housing). Otherwise, local governments would need more planning staff to process these expedited reviews, increasing their costs at a time of great budget uncertainty.

The -1s would make the bill even worse by requiring one-sided awards of attorney’s fees and engineering costs to the applicant or the local government if they are a prevailing party at the Land Use Board of Appeals. This would not only chill meritorious appeals, but it would provide an incentive for local governments to rubber stamp urban housing applications because they would not be liable for paying fees and costs, but they could collect them.

Please oppose SB 974 so that single-family housing is not placed at the front of the line to the detriment of all other types of development including affordable multifamily housing.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,