

Submitter: Erica Thompson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB974

While I support efforts to streamline housing production, this bill as written will have many unintended consequences. First, if a measure such as this is pursued, the state should provide exceptions and allowances for cities that have demonstrated they are removing obstacles to housing, as Portland has. Design Review in Portland underwent an administrative and legislative overhaul (DOZA) in Summer of 2021, investing significant resources, to streamline the process and make it more predictable for investors. Design Review in Portland does not apply to small residential development and is limited to a very small percentage of the City. The way this policy is worded to include any mixed-use urban housing opens the doors for developers of any sort of project to escape design review by showing a single dwelling unit in their plans. This should be addressed.

As a planning commissioner, I have seen how state bills such as this force cities to be "reactive" in their compliance, pulling focus from local plans and initiatives that are more attuned to the issues and needs of a particular place in order to quickly comply with a broad strokes policy that lacks nuance. Please consider a more measured approach that allows cities to determine the appropriate pathway to balancing the goals of their comprehensive plans in a holistic way. This policy pits housing against other goals and policies, such as urban form, design and development, and community involvement, in ways that are unnecessary and will lead to weaker outcomes.