

Mayor
Honorable Tom Ellis

City Manager
Jason A. Tuck, ICMA-CM



March 1, 2023

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Opposition to House Bill 2984

Dear Honorable Chair Dexter and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2984.

On behalf of the Happy Valley City Council, I would like to express our strong opposition to HB 2984. Communities across our state are facing a housing crisis; however, preemptive legislation such as HB 2984 will stifle the ability of local governments to achieve our shared interests and produce unintended consequences.

Happy Valley has been one of the fastest growing communities in Oregon for nearly two decades. Since 2000, the City's population has quadrupled. Just in the last 15 years, the City added 5,656 new housing units, 2,033 of which were multi-family. Through years working in a fast-growing community, the City has refined our local permitting process to be one of the quickest and most responsive in the Portland area.

Looking to the future, the City is in the process of approving a comprehensive plan update for 2,700 acres of the former Damascus area. That area is expected to add 7,500 new households with a near 50/50 split of single-family and multi-family/attached units. Focusing our attention to implementing the multitude of legislative mandates such as HB 2984 will take time away from our ability to process permit applications in this expansion area.

While the City understands the housing crisis, our job as elected officials is to balance the many competing interests within our community. We pride ourselves not on being one of the fastest growing communities, but doing so in a way that builds complete neighborhoods, balancing the impacts of growth with environmental stewardship and community livability.

Below highlight the City's specific concerns with HB 2984.

Prevents Public Involvement

Top-down approaches can produce conflicts between state goals. Notably, HB 2984 is counter to the very pillar of Oregon's unique land use system: Goal 1, Citizen Involvement. The provisions of HB 2984 supersede local zoning and development standards that were developed by gathering input from community members and implemented by volunteer Planning Commissioners and the elected City Council. The proposal effectively eliminates local commercial zones and prohibits the City from charging necessary impact fees to support infrastructure investments in these areas.

Doesn't Address the Housing Problem

HB 2984 doesn't address the true barriers to accommodating more housing. As mentioned earlier, the City expects over 7,500 new housing units to be built within the next few years. The most significant impediments are the cost of public infrastructure to serve those sites and the high cost of land in the metro area. Neither of which are addressed by HB 2984. The City encourages the Governor and Legislative Assembly to engage meaningfully with a wide variety of jurisdictions and those involved in development to identify a list of strategies which would be more effective at addressing the housing problem.

HB 2984 Ignores the Importance of Thoughtful Planning

As mentioned, HB 2984 effectively eliminates commercial zoning. These areas are critical to building well balanced community with land for jobs, grocery stores, medical offices, and other critical services. Furthermore, due to limitations of Measures 5 and 50, cities need commercial areas for property tax purposes. Lastly, most cities, Happy Valley included, already have allowances for residential components in commercial areas to provide for mixed-use developments.

As a City Council, we ask the Governor and Legislative Assembly to see us as equal partners in the implementation of our common interests. Our team does the work every day of creating an environment that supports more housing units at all income levels. We work tirelessly to build a diverse and equitable community that will thrive for decades to come. Please, partner with us to continue this work, rather than forcing us to spend our efforts implementing new bureaucratic measures that don't solve the problem.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.



Tom Ellis
Mayor

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Preserving and enhancing the safety, livability and character of our community