

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

Please remove Section 22(1)(f) from this bill.

The intent of HB 2138 is to create more middle housing in Oregon, which I generally support.

Section 22(1)(f) currently requires “(f) Repealing requirements for demolition review for houses listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing structures to a historic district that are not themselves named as historic structures.”

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.

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.

We know that our existing older homes are NOT an impediment to adding housing, nor is the balanced process of demolition review. Every town/city has areas with older homes. They may have some that are listed in National Register of Historic Places. In Oregon we are really younger in building towns and cities. That means our older homes and businesses are real examples of who we are and where we come from. Houses are our human history.

Removing demolition review denies the public a voice, counter to the State 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?

Also, demolition is forever and more demolition works against our climate goals. Low-carbon strategies that add affordable housing should be a priority for climate action over climate-impactful demolition and resource-intensive costly new construction, whenever possible.

Instead, to support the development of more affordable housing, we should use an inclusive “both-and” strategy to add more units within designated historic areas through an incentive package for adapting or internally converting existing residential housing to multi-unit housing in non-contributing properties, for adding ADU’s, and for offering affordability incentives to retain existing affordable heritage properties.

Repealing requirements for demolition review for all houses listed as contributing structures in the National Register of Historic Places is an extreme measure. It doesn’t make sense to cut your arms off to add more fingers to your hands. Better to make your arms and hands stronger and more flexible.