

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

Testimony in Support of SB 974-1

To the Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 974-1, a crucial measure that will help address Oregon's ongoing housing crisis. As a Title Person in this real estate industry, I have seen firsthand the significant delays and high costs in the current housing approval process, and I believe this bill is a critical step toward making housing more affordable and accessible for Oregonians.

The Current Process is Lengthy and far too Costly

The current housing approval process is often unnecessarily lengthy and complex. In my experience, it can take 12 to 18 months—or even longer—just to get approvals for residential projects. These delays are not only frustrating but also contribute to the rising cost of housing in our state. When projects are delayed, developers face increased costs, and these costs are ultimately passed down to homebuyers, making homes less affordable. The longer the approval process takes, the fewer homes are built each year, and the more difficult it becomes for families to find affordable housing.

The Financial Impact of Appeals and Design Reviews

Another major issue is the financial burden caused by unnecessary appeals and design reviews. These additional steps are often costly and time-consuming, and they do little to improve the quality of housing projects. In fact, appeals and excessive design review requirements can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the overall cost of a project, and these costs are inevitably passed on to homebuyers. This makes it even more difficult for many Oregonians to afford a new home.

How SB 974-1 Will Streamline the Process and Lower Costs

SB 974-1 is exactly what we need to address these challenges. The bill includes key provisions that will streamline the approval process, reduce delays, and lower costs:

The 120-Day Shot Clock for approvals ensures that permits and engineering decisions are made in a timely manner, providing developers with the certainty they need to move forward.

Limited Land Use Decisions will simplify the approval process for residential projects, especially in residential zones, reducing unnecessary delays.

Reimbursement of Legal and Engineering Fees discourages frivolous appeals and

protects developers from financial burdens that arise from delays and unnecessary costs.

Elimination of Aesthetic Design Reviews removes an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy that slows down the process without improving the quality of homes. These changes will make the development process faster and more affordable, allowing builders to construct more homes and ultimately making housing more affordable for all Oregonians.

I strongly urge the committee to pass SB 974-1. The current housing approval process is broken, and this bill is an essential step toward fixing it. By streamlining the approval process and reducing unnecessary costs, we can build more homes, lower housing costs, and help solve Oregon's housing crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sybil Fontaine
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