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March 17, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Capital
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: City of Sherwood Testimony on SB 974-1

Dear Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

The City of Sherwood appreciates the work of the legislature in support of housing production in Oregon. Sherwood has a shared interest in producing needed housing and supports the issue by proactively planning for growth and providing high quality, efficient customer service to residential developers and builders.

We have had the opportunity to review SB 974-1 and oppose the bill. As written, the bill is unclear and will lead to unintended consequences and legal liability for local jurisdictions. We share the following concerns for your consideration:

Unclear Language and Ambiguous Intent. The current definition of an Urban Housing Application on Page 6, Line 22 of the latest amendment refers to a “combined” application and would potentially require a city to process a zone change, subdivision, and engineering review all within 120-days. Our understanding is that the intent of the bill is for each step in the review process to be considered a different “Urban Housing Application”. These types of details matter when adopting new legislation, and this bill has not been adequately prepared for serious consideration by cities.

More Denials of Housing Applications or Risk Public Safety. The mandatory timelines in the bill will force local jurisdictions to significantly increase fees for more staff. The City of Sherwood estimates that for every 20,000 residents, three new FTEs will be required across planning and engineering departments to meet the new review timelines. Where hiring more planners and engineers cannot be accomplished, cities will be forced to deny applications instead of allowing automatic approval where basic engineering and safety standards are not met.

Erosion of Citizen Involvement in Planning. The bill reduces opportunities for public input on housing applications, undermining citizen involvement in land use decisions.

Community Character and Historic Buildings Areas at Risk. The bill restricts local governments' ability to require minimum design standards for residential areas including historic buildings and scenic corridors.

Infrastructure Efficiency and Safety: The bill's automatic approval provisions would result in new large-scale development that doesn't adequately account for utility infrastructure needs, potentially creating unsafe and inefficient systems. A city would be required to approve any size residential or mixed-use project without conditions that ensure water, sewer, and transportation improvements are adequate to serve the new development.

The City of Sherwood looks forward to working with you in support of housing production. While SB 974-1 has good intentions, it has not been developed in coordination with local jurisdictions that implement housing programs on a daily basis in Oregon. Thank you for considering our testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Tim Rosener
Mayor, City of Sherwood