

Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager
In Opposition to House Bill 3154
House Committee on Housing
March 4, 2021



Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee:

Metro is the regional government for the greater Portland metropolitan area, tasked by Oregon statute with making decisions every six years about how and where the region will grow. Our region has a strong track record of supporting the core purposes of Oregon's statewide planning system – protecting farms and forests by facilitating efficient urban development, while providing additional room for people and jobs when needed by expanding the urban growth boundary.

In recent years, we have worked with our partners to improve how we do this work. Among other things, we have financially supported local efforts to make the most of existing land, required concept planning to ensure that UGB expansions will result in needed housing, required that UGB expansion areas allow “middle housing,” and continuously improved our technical analyses that support growth management decisions.

The Metro Council opposes HB 3154. This bill appears to be based on certain assumptions, one of which is that buildable capacity is being ascribed to parcels that are unlikely to actually redevelop, thereby understating land need and leading to an artificial shortage of buildable land. Another may be that the redevelopment capacity ascribed to a particular property in a regional inventory somehow affects whether that property will in fact be redeveloped or preserved. Neither assumption is correct.

When Metro enters into a growth management process – which we are required by statute to do at least every six years – we empanel advisory committees of planners, developers and economists to advise us on population and employment projections and redevelopment assumptions. We begin the process of developing a buildable land inventory by examining aerial photos of the entire region as well as local zoning and on-the-ground conditions. After identifying vacant land and backing out environmentally sensitive areas and steep slopes, we remove other areas that are unlikely to develop, including brownfields and most already developed parcels. Market factors drive evaluation of redevelopment potential, including by modeling the likelihood of redevelopment based on observed trends. City and county staff review this work at the level of individual tax lots. Over time, the analysis that underlies the Metro Council’s growth management decisions, from 20-year population and employment projections to assumptions about redevelopment and infill, has proven remarkably accurate.

Moreover, whether we count a particular parcel as buildable or not has no bearing on whether it gets redeveloped. The buildable lands inventory is just that: an inventory, not a regulatory or development decision.

The Metro Council’s 2021 legislative agenda specifically calls on the Legislature to “oppose efforts to distort the process of assessing land need by mandating inaccurate analysis.” HB 3154 would statutorily require that Metro’s buildable land inventory be incorrect. We urge you not to move it forward.