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Subject: Suggestions for housing code
Date: Sunday, October 11, 2026 2:29:16 PM

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I would like to comment on land use planning and housing supply and codes that I didn't see included in recent rule-making, and also briefly on wildfire risk and new development. I am making these comments from the perspective of somebody who lives in Bend and realize situations elsewhere in Oregon may differ. At the end, I offer a few general comments about reduction of wildfire risk and land use planning.

After serving on two Bend city urban growth expansion committees and seeing the consequences of growth in Bend, especially on traffic congestion and quality of life, I believe amendments are needed to Oregon's landmark land use laws and regulations.

The requirement of a 20-year supply of land for housing has resulted in the building of a lot of single-family housing that is not affordable to an individual or family earning a median or lower wage in Bend. It has brought in many people from places with more money, many of them retirees and not the full spectrum of the workforce Bend and other cities need. The majority of acres being currently developed in southeast Bend, for example, are unaffordable to the average family. In cities such as Bend, at least 80% of new housing in subdivisions larger than 2 acres should be required to be affordable to the average or median income individual or family.

That has driven up housing prices to beyond what most locals can afford, considerably increased traffic congestion on a road system that was not designed for rapid growth, and increased crowding within the city and at recreation sites around the city.

I recommend that a housing need analysis under Goal 10 Housing, or the Housing Production Strategy of HB 2003, be limited to provide a 20-year supply of only low and lower-moderate income housing (affordable to those earning area median income or less), or perhaps even just the supply needed for lower income housing (<80% of area median income), for cities with populations greater than perhaps 50,000.

The priority should be placed on mixed-income housing (mix of subsidized and market-rate housing) and mixed-use (mix of housing with commercial/retail) development within the existing city, and especially along public transit routes.

Allowing duplexes and accessory dwelling units within a city and in areas zoned for single family residential under HB 2001 will help a little.

Given the shortage of affordable housing, especially for those at the lower end of middle income, cities should have a way of requiring smaller homes such as those many of us and our parents grew up in. A city should have the authority to specify that homes be limited to 1200 square feet, either a large percentage or an entire subdivision. This would also allow for more homes on less land and less sprawl.

Rules should also encourage old fashioned boarding houses with kitchen facilities, and with or without a cook. This would give workers at least a temporary place to live.

Short-term rentals should be phased out in residential over the next three years, and certainly no new permits should be issued for short-term rentals anywhere there is a shortage of affordable housing.

We need more mixed income housing, differing types of housing for all income levels within the same neighborhood or apartment/condominium building. While IRS and state/city rules on affordable housing may make this more difficult for builders, it is a healthier environment for residents and neighborhoods. We need to get away from the low income housing projects of the 1950s and 60s. In Mumbai, India, where I am from, a developer can redevelop a property, or several properties, by getting the signatures of 70% of current residents, including people regularly sleeping there in the street by the building. The developer then will then replace an older 3-6 storey building with one that is 10-40 stories providing housing for all current residents and many others. Apartments or condos may range from 200 sq ft with a light well to a top floor luxury apartment with a great view. While Oregon cities should not all have 10-40 storey buildings, the concept could apply to smaller developments.

We need to get away from a sprawl of single-family homes not affordable to the average current resident.

Now briefly about wildfire hazard,

To increase public safety and reduce taxpayer costs for protecting structures from wildfire, Oregon needs to limit all future new construction in high fire risk wildland urban interface and strengthen building codes.

The state's land use laws should be amended so that all new construction within or adjacent to highly fire-prone forests and shrublands be extremely limited to unusual situations.

Catastrophic wildfire will happen, and possibly with increasing intensity with climate warming; it is just a matter of when.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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