

**House Committee on Human Services and Housing
HB 2001 Public Hearing, February 11, 2019
Testimony of Brandon Brezic, Portland, Oregon, 97219
House District 38
Senate District 19**

Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer,
Vice-Chairs Ron Noble and Tawna Sanchez
And Members of the Committee,

I am a millennial. I am a student. I am a renter. I am a part of the generation that is struggling to attain home ownership in the midst of our nation's housing crisis. As a non-profit affordable housing professional, **I am absolutely in favor of HB 2001** and Speaker Kotek's resolution to allow the up-zoning of exclusionary single-family zoning. HB 2001 will re-legalize duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, cottage clusters and ADUs state wide. This significant and necessary change to our state's land-use policy will help solve our housing supply shortage. Allowing for more housing options on our existing residential lands would make Oregon's cities equitable, affordable, and sustainable as we head into the future.

I would love to start off sharing some background with regards to where our wide spread single-family zoning came from:

*"It was in 1924 that Portland voters **approved the city's first zoning plan** in a citywide vote, four years after having narrowly rejected the idea.*

*It was a turbulent moment in Oregon politics. In 1922, the resurgent Ku Klux Klan had swept to electoral victory across the state, putting its members **in the governor's mansion, the House speakership, and controlling the Multnomah County Commission**. In 1923, the Klan-backed **Alien Land Bill**, banning Japanese nationals from owning property in Oregon, sailed through the Klansman-led state legislature with just one dissenting vote." (Source: <https://www.sightline.org/2018/05/25/a-century-of-exclusion-portlands-1924-rezone-is-still-coded-on-its-streets/>)*

During this time, red-lined racial covenants were common place:

"For black residents, the only choice, if they wanted to stay in Portland, was a neighborhood called Albina that had emerged as a popular place to live for the black porters who worked in nearby Union Station. It was the only place black people were allowed to buy homes, after, in 1919, the Realty Board of Portland had approved a Code of Ethics forbidding realtors and bankers from selling or giving loans to minorities for properties located in white neighborhoods.

As black people moved into Albina, whites moved out; by the end of the 1950s, there were 23,000 fewer white residents and 7,000 more black residents than there had been at the beginning of the decade.” (Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/racist-history-portland/492035/>)

Oregon was not alone.

*“A parallel national movement was afoot. A White House task force convened in 1921 was pushing US cities to pass zoning codes. The task force’s official documents never mentioned race, but its members were “outspoken segregationists” who (as **documented** by Richard Rothstein) wrote elsewhere that zoning could help segregate people by race.*

*This was the political environment when Portland’s real estate brokers brought a revised zoning plan back to voters for another try. Authored by H.E. Plummer, who served as a planning commissioner and head of the city’s bureau of buildings, the 1924 plan was approved with **60 percent** of the vote, and formally separated industrial and residential development. And it introduced another idea, too: “single-family” zoning, which required households who wanted to live in certain parts of town to be able to pay not only for a home but for a certain minimum amount of land around it—at least 5,000 square feet in most cases. Other sorts of homes would be banned.*

*Then in 1959—incidentally, 11 years after the US Supreme Court **declared “racial covenants,” race-restrictive clauses in housing deeds, “unenforceable”**—Portland tried something even bigger. It expanded its ban on attached housing to almost every neighborhood.” (Source: <https://www.sightline.org/2018/05/25/a-century-of-exclusion-portlands-1924-rezone-is-still-coded-on-its-streets/>)*

Even though Oregon’s wide-spread single-family zoning has its roots in white supremacy and exclusion - this bill **does not** ban the option to build single-family homes like many individuals in opposition seem to conclude. To me it seems the motivating factor for individuals in opposition to HB 2001 is a resistance to equitable progress and a desire to ensure our cities remain exclusive, wealthy, white, single-family havens. However, owner occupied properties will be largely unaffected by a zoning change until the owner decides to sell the property. Involuntary displacement due HB 2001, or similarly the City of Portland’s Residential Infill Project will be minimal. In fact, anti-gentrification groups support changes in land-use policy to allow for varying housing types!

*“Portland may partially reverse its 1924 and 1959 mistakes As we’ve **been reporting**, Portland (**like Minneapolis** & Seattle) is currently considering an end to this ban on duplexes and other gentle density citywide—not only in the parts of*

the city where attached housing was legal until 1959, but also in the parts of the city that have almost no attached homes because they were banned in 1924.

Among those [backing this re-legalization at the planning commission this month](#) were some Portlanders whose ancestors, if they'd lived in Oregon, would have been forbidden to own property.

One was Danell Norby of [Anti-Displacement PDX](#). She [spoke on behalf of her part of town](#), East Portland. Re-legalizing small attached housing there, she said, would both allow "outer areas the density needed to support additional amenities" and give nonprofit developers more tools for preventing displacement."

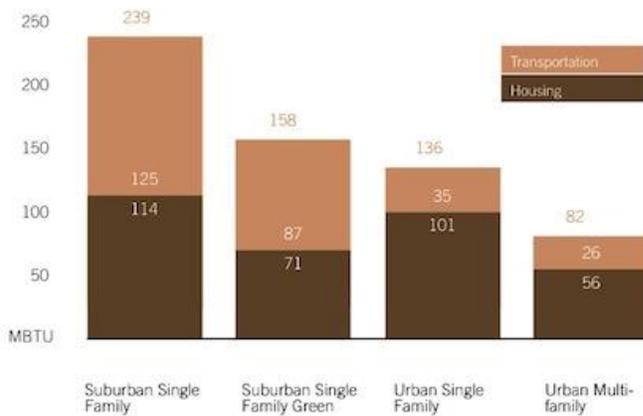
(Source: <https://www.sightline.org/2018/05/25/a-century-of-exclusion-portlands-1924-rezone-is-still-coded-on-its-streets/>)

Modest bungalows and ranch-style homes where I live near Multnomah Village in Portland and throughout our states older communities, have already out-priced the affordability of their local median household income. I work for a non-profit affordable housing developer who works in every corner of the state, developing homes for Oregon families, workers, veterans, elderly, and disabled residents. Essentially all of our projects come in the form of multifamily dwellings, often duplexes, triplexes, and quads. We operate within the confines existing zoning. We cannot afford to go through a zoning change process and still make our subsidized housing pencil out. This zoning change would have significant impact on the ability of organizations like mine to operate effectively throughout our state.

Housing affordability and a reduced carbon footprint are counter intuitive to single-family zoning. This is exactly the problem that California has had. Although I was born in Oregon, I lived in California for two years and worked for the largest non-profit affordable housing developer in the state. California housing prices have jumped to insane levels while many neighborhoods have remained largely single family, even in the most populated cities. Aging single-family ranches are priced on average well-over \$1,000,000 down there. This is due to the lack of housing supply produced since the housing booms of the 1980s and pre-2008. California's growing population has created massive demand for housing options that just simply aren't available, in-turn forcing home prices up. I witnessed first-hand cities and neighborhoods fighting development throughout California, just like the many communities are doing here. I don't want to see the housing crisis of Portland and Oregon reach the levels that they have in California. In order to create housing supply we need a land-use policy that allows non-profits, government agencies, and local business to build homes in our cities!

Additionally, as a state and as a nation, we must dramatically reduce our reliance on fossil fuels in order to live sustainably on this planet. HB 2001 would allow housing stock to be built in our existing neighborhoods! It would allow people to live in proximity to where they work instead of continually sprawling outwards to the edges of our Urban Growth Boundaries, prolonging our car-dependent society. I would urge the committee to ensure **every** city & community within Metro’s Urban Growth Boundary be included in this policy, whether incorporated or unincorporated. Every expansion of our cities’ Urban Growth Boundaries, encroaches on our states working farm-lands, and open spaces we celebrate so dearly.

Figure 17: Household Energy Use in Compact versus Sprawling Neighborhoods: Average In-Town House Outperforms Even a “Green” Sprawl House (with Hybrid Cars)



Source: Jonathan Rose Companies, LLC (cited in Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability, “Greening Mass Transit and the Metro Regions, the Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability and the MTA”, New York Metropolitan Transit Authority, January, 2009.)

The State of Oregon has always been a leader in our country with regard to revolutionary land-use policy, since the days of Governor Tom McCall. We have the potential to once again the lead the nation as an inclusive, sustainable, livable, and affordable state. Allowing denser development is what will curb higher home prices, decrease our carbon footprint and ultimately create housing options for residents like myself, searching housing stability. I am calling all the honorable members of this committee to please support and work to enact the bill into law!

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Brandon Brezic
bbrezic@pdx.edu