



Home Builders Association
of Metropolitan Portland

November 2, 2020
Kent Studebaker, Mayor
Lake Oswego City Councilor
380 A Ave., 3rd Floor
Lake Oswego, OR 97034

Re: Agenda Item: Number 5.1 (Ordinance 2853 - R-6 Maximum Lot Coverage Standard)

Dear Mayor Studebaker,

The Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland (HBA) represents over 800 companies and tens of thousands of women and men who work in the residential building and remodeling industries throughout the greater Portland area. We promote housing affordability and choice for all who reside in the region.

Lake Oswego's R-6 zone supports the construction of new, relatively attainable housing throughout the City. First implemented in 1996, the zone's primary purpose was to create minimum lot size and development standards more consistent with the existing pattern of development in the First Addition-Forest Hills Neighborhood, which consisted of 6,000 square foot lots.

Last year, the Oregon State Legislature passed HB2001, legalizing additional housing options in single family zoned neighborhoods across the state. The landmark legislation does not preclude the construction of single family homes but rather expands housing choices in the same areas, to meet the needs of Oregonians at all income levels. Perhaps most importantly, the bill seeks to dismantle historic racist housing policies, which excluded minority communities from our most affluent neighborhoods.

Under HB2001, Lake Oswego's R-6 zone could allow for duplexes, townhomes, and other middle housing types. These housing types are critical to helping Lake Oswego accommodate needed new housing and address the Portland region's protracted housing crisis. A recent report shows that Oregon has underbuilt housing — by over 155,000 units — since the Great Recession. Importantly, the need for new housing has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent economic decline, and wildfire devastation.

Given the urgent need for new housing options, Lake Oswego should avoid undermining housing affordability, especially in zones that have the best chances for redevelopment. Unfortunately, that is precisely what Ordinance 2853 would do. Specifically, it would unnecessarily restrict the permitted building footprint in the R-6 zone, causing a dramatic reduction in allowable square footage. By changing the way height is measured and counting previously-excluded structures toward lot coverage,

Ordinance 2853 would lead to fewer homes. Because the R-6 zone currently allows lots to be used more efficiently than other zones, new housing is most attainable in the First Addition-Forest Hills Neighborhood.

HBA is concerned that Ordinance 2853 undermines middle housing. Because the Ordinance increases the housing price-per-square-foot, it threatens to pre-emptively block middle housing from even coming to market. Importantly, HB2001 was written to explicitly protect against regulations that disproportionately impact the construction of this housing.

Despite the Lake Oswego's stated desire to save trees, it is unclear whether the proposed changes will actually help to achieve this aim. Given the City's desire for alley-loaded garages, many trees are removed regardless of lot coverage standards, and would continue to be removed even with the proposed changes. **In the shared interest of preserving as many trees as possible, HBA requests more time to work with the neighborhood associations and the City to carry on the important conversation around housing affordability and tree preservation.**

Instead of marching ahead with the proposed changes, Lake Oswego should reconvene the stakeholders for additional discussion and review. Doing so would support long-term relationship-building between the neighborhood, City, and development community. It would also give homeowners an opportunity to better understand the proposal's impact on their property values. Lake Oswego should hold off on adopting Ordinance 2853 and instead work to promote a robust conversation around housing affordability and tree preservation.

Respectfully,



Roseann Johnson

Assistant Director of Government Affairs

Cc: Councilor Theresa Kohlhoff
Councilor John LaMotte
Councilor Jackie Manz
Councilor Daniel Nguyen
Councilor Skip O'Neill
Councilor John Wendland