



May 15, 2025

Washington County Commission  
155 N First Avenue, Suite 300,  
MS 21 Hillsboro, OR 97124

**Re: Washington County Opposition to Proposed Permit Fee Increase**

Dear Chair Harrington and Members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed FY 2025–26 permit fee increase. My name is Isaac Ambruso, and I serve as the Deputy Director of Public Policy for the Home Building Association of Greater Portland. I am writing today on behalf of our members to respectfully express our opposition to the proposed 8.5% increase in permit fees for the Land Use and Transportation Department’s budget.

We understand that rising costs—including staffing, benefits, and technology improvements—are real challenges for public agencies. However, the proposed increase significantly exceeds inflationary benchmarks. Both the Consumer Price Index and the Construction Cost Index reflect annual increases of less than 3%, making an 8.5% increase difficult to justify—particularly at a time when housing affordability remains one of the most urgent issues facing our region and state.

While we recognize that the County has adopted a policy to fund planning and permitting operations entirely through fee collection, it is important to remember that these costs directly affect the delivery of new housing. Our members do not dispute the County’s fiscal responsibilities, but relying solely on builders and developers to shoulder increasing operational costs places additional pressure on the housing market and works against the County’s broader goals for affordability and supply.

This marks the third consecutive year of steep fee increases, including a 50% increase in 2023 and another 8.5% increase in 2024. The cumulative effect of these hikes is unsustainable. These costs are not absorbed in a vacuum—they are ultimately passed on to the consumer. By fully recouping development costs without exploring general fund support, the County is shifting the burden onto the very individuals and families it hopes to attract in order to grow and thrive.

Additionally, these continued increases risk pricing out smaller builders and individual landowners and may discourage the development of infill and middle housing—types of projects that the County itself has prioritized in policy and planning documents.

We respectfully ask the Commission to consider a more modest adjustment in line with industry inflation, and to explore policy alternatives that distribute costs more equitably—such as limited general fund contributions for essential planning services.

Thank you for your time and for your continued engagement with the building community. We look forward to working together on solutions that promote both fiscal responsibility and a thriving, sustainable housing market in Washington County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Isaac Ambruso".

Isaac Ambruso  
Deputy Director of Public Policy  
Home Building Association of Greater Portland