

Dear Olympia City Council and Staff,

I write as an Olympia resident and a member of the Thurston League of Women Voters to strongly express my disagreement with the City's Housing Options plan.

I understand that affordable housing is a major problem in our City and along the entire West Coast. But there are some serious problems with the plan the City is proposing.

As a member of the League which advocates for government transparency and accountability, I frankly am appalled by the notion that actions by the City under HB 1923 cannot be appealed.

This is "liberal" Olympia, not an authoritarian regime. I do not understand how this can even be legal. It strips citizens' rights to protest the actions of the government, and may result in lawsuits against the City.

The City's plan has been found illegal by the Growth Management Hearings Board. Yet, the City is foisting it upon its citizens without the right to appeal? Where are we living?

Besides the undemocratic nature of the process, the substance of the plan itself does not make sense. No one is against density.

I want to preserve our land base, our natural resources and our quality of life as much as anyone.

Yet, this plan will do far too little to solve the one problem everyone agrees we have - that of affordable housing.

It's estimated that this plan, which would adversely affect all the neighborhoods in the City, would only result in a 2.5-5% increase in housing. What this plan will do is encourage outside investors with deep pockets to buy up old houses and turn them into market rate duplexes and 4plexes, thereby forcing lower income renters from the houses they now occupy.

We can already build ADUs, but allowing them to be owned and sold separately only encourages the commodification of housing. You only need look at what happened downtown when tenants were displaced from their \$800 month apartments which were then renovated to market rate. Even if all three options are adopted, it will do little to solve the affordable housing crisis. This will INCREASE it, not abate it.

The experience of other cities is clear. When high profit houses are built in neighborhoods, the surrounding property values increase making the whole neighborhood LESS affordable.

I've seen it happen in New York and San Francisco. I've seen once working class neighborhoods gentrified so that only higher income people could afford to live there. It is extremely deceptive to claim otherwise.

As for the SEPA DNS, how on earth can the City claim there will be no environmental effects before there is a specific project proposal before it?

You can't claim in advance that there won't be effects on the neighborhood or the environment. How about the combined sewer and stormwater system that might be overloaded, for one? It doesn't make sense.

I want an Olympia that is livable for its residents, not one that is attractive to investors from outside the area whose motivation is profit. There are more important things than real estate values. How about the values of community and sustainability and democracy? It's time we started acting in a way that benefits the local population, not out-of-town investors, who are those most likely to benefit from these proposals.

I strongly urge the City to withdraw this proposal. It is deceptive because it claims to solve a problem it won't. It is undemocratic because it takes away the rights of citizens to appeal. It sacrifices the Olympia we love for another overpriced gentrified town. It does not serve the public interest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Esther K.