

## Can the City Council Be Trusted?

One of the Council's goal is to build trust with the community, but a recent Councilor statement raises some doubt. At the June 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Commission meeting on the HB 2001 Middle Housing code amendments, Councilor Goodman-Campbell stated, "we have the potential to drastically increase the quantity and the diversity of the housing options for people living in Bend.... that everyone who works in Bend can afford to live in Bend.

There will be no drastic increase in diversity of housing options. HB 2001's five building types (duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhouse and cottages) are already allowed in the Bend Development Code. To meet the housing type mandate, the only amendment needed is to allow quadplexes in the RS zone. It is currently allowed only in RM zone.

There will be no drastic increase in quantity. Middle Housing is already being built. From 2016 to 2019, 412 middle housing units have been built. Most middle housing is built in new developments. HB 2001 intended to make in-fill middle housing more viable, but Bend's in-fill has been occurring and there are few new opportunities left in existing neighborhoods.

There will be no drastic increase in the affordability. The proposed code amendments include modifications to four key standards. The Councilor assumes these amendments will lead to more affordable housing. There are two errors in this assumption. The first error is costs do not factor into setting rents. The marketplace sets the rent. Any cost savings will just put money in the landlord's pocket.

The second error is the assumption that these amendments significantly lower costs. First, a small reduction in lot size standard doesn't lower land cost. Land cost is not based on a per square foot price, but rather, what can be built on the lot.

Second, the cost savings for reducing the parking standard is only between 1 to 3 % of the project cost depending on whether it is surface or garage parking. Ironically, the builders on the staff's advisory committee admit that they will continue to provide garages and surface parking because the marketplace demands it.

Third, the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standard was eliminated for all one- and two-story residences. Three-story buildings will have a maximum FAR of 1.1, which is nearly double the existing FAR of 0.60. The consequence is larger, more costly buildings which require higher rents to pencil.

Fourth, the amendments include eliminating some "design" standards (street trees, landscaping and other minor requirements). These eliminated design standards were intended to integrate new dwellings into an existing neighborhood and only cost about 1% of the project's cost.

All these amendments will result in a net increase in project costs which will accelerate the gentrification of Bend, the opposite result the Councilor and HB 2001 intends.

The Councilor repeated staff's false statement that the city has little latitude in compliance with the HB 2001. The state allows the community to choose a 3<sup>rd</sup> path to regulate these housing

types providing their regulations don't cause unreasonable cost or delay. However, staff has employed four tactics to remove the community choice path (3<sup>rd</sup> path) from consideration; a) they lobbied the state to limit this 3<sup>rd</sup> option, b) they tried to hide this third path, c) they claimed it was too expensive, and d) finally, they claimed they did not know how to use this third path.

Trust needs to be earned. Other Oregon cities conducted community engagement and evaluation of options prior to drafting code. Other cities are spending the time and hiring consultants to achieve the most effective development code. This one fact should undermine the community's trust in its Council and staff. Only you can hold your Council accountable. Ask your Council a few basic questions, such as, how do these code amendments accomplish what Councilor Goodman-Campbell is selling. Rhetoric without fact checking, leads to ineffective planning efforts.