



May 23, 2011

Representative Paul Holvey  
Representative Brad Whisnant  
House Government and Consumer Protection Committee  
Committee Services Office  
900 Court St. NE, Room 453  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Representative Holvey and Whisnant:

I am writing you on behalf of Housing Land Advocates, a nonprofit Oregon entity that advocates on behalf of affordable housing, specifically as that cause is advanced through Oregon land use laws. Our organization was established to advocate, and educate on behalf of those Oregonians who find it difficult to have access to safe, sanitary and affordable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter. Inclusionary zoning or inclusionary housing ("IZ") is a land use tool that has gained rapid acceptance and proven track record across the nation in helping meet affordable housing needs and creating healthy communities. It is a tool that doesn't require taxation, complex regulation and is straightforward in its application. Variations exist in its application that can be tailored to the specific needs of local jurisdictions. IZ is a tool that Oregonians cannot afford not to have.

IZ works by requiring that a given share of new construction be made affordable to people with low to moderate income. The term "inclusionary" indicates that it attempts to counterbalance the prevalent way in which new housing is provided, which exclude low-income housing from new construction and accompanying public services. The end result is healthier communities where affordable housing units and market-rate housing coexist in the same area, with no negative impact on market-rate housing.

Below is a summary of the benefits of IZ and how it will benefit communities in Oregon.

**1. Assists jurisdiction in meeting affordable housing needs in the community.**

Inclusionary zoning is a flexible strategy with a proven track record of meeting a community's affordable housing needs. IZ has become a common tool in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Colorado, and the DC Metropolitan Area, as well as other cities like Santa Fe, New Mexico and Burlington, Vermont.



## **2. A tool to ensure compliance with State Land Goal 10: Housing.**

IZ is a flexible planning tool that allows jurisdictions to intentionally plan for needed housing for all Oregonians and meet their legal obligations under Goal 10.

## **3. A strategy to assist in reducing green house gas (GHG) emissions.**

The availability of IZ as a planning tool promotes jurisdictions ability to reduce GHG emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled by locating affordable housing closer to jobs-- a "jobs-housing fit" that also helps reduce out of pocket travel expenses.

## **4. Promotes the development of mixed income, diverse, integrated communities.**

IZ policies help build economically and racially integrated communities. People in poor neighborhoods are typically isolated from access to livable wage jobs, quality education, adequate health services, and protection from criminal activities. Mixed income communities broaden access to well-funded schools, strong municipal services and emerging job centers. Mixed income communities also provide openings through which low-wage earning families can buy homes in appreciating housing markets, accumulate wealth, and share a part of the American dream.

## **5. Provides housing for a diverse labor force.**

A healthy community requires a diverse labor pool, including professionals, service sector employees, public servants, and others. In escalating housing markets, lower-paid employees are the first to be driven out. Inclusionary zoning helps build a diverse housing market, ensuring that lower income individuals, whose housing needs are not met through the market, can live in the community where they work. This helps *attract and retain businesses* who know that holding on to good employees is easier when they can afford to live within a reasonable commuting distance. Communities and regions also benefit from a resulting reduction in commute times, air pollution and congestion.

## **6. Protects against displacement when new investment occurs.**

Inclusionary zoning policies are an effective tool for *maintaining* affordability in housing markets. In communities facing displacement or experiencing significant new investment, the housing market is often the most acutely impacted. As higher income individuals move into a neighborhood, housing prices rise, displacing low to moderate-income residents. In communities planning for new investment or already experiencing this pattern of displacement, IZ policies promote balanced housing development by ensuring that some portion of new housing development is affordable.



**7. A tool to ensure compliance with Metropolitan Housing Rule and Functional Plan Requirements.**

IZ assists jurisdictions in meeting minimum housing type and density standards for each metropolitan area city for compliance with OAR 660, Division 7 (the "Metropolitan Housing Rule"), and in meeting the capacity targets for buildable land for each local government established in Metro Functional Plan Title 1.

**8. The ban on inclusionary zoning is a barrier to local jurisdictions capacity to address their pressing housing, economic and other community needs.**

Oregon is known as a leader in land use planning. Yet on the issue of affordable housing we are lagging behind other states and regions of the country. The ban on IZ limits jurisdictions' ability to have a complete toolkit to shape their communities. There is strong research indicating that IZ has significant positive benefits for low income families and communities at large. In an era of increasing housing and transportation costs, stagnating wages, the need to respond to Climate Change and address unemployment, and provide needed infrastructure and public services, Oregonians cannot afford not to have a wide range of tools to help maintain and enhance the quality of life we're rightly known for. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this critical issue.

Thank you very much for your attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen Johnson", is written over the typed name.

Ellen Johnson  
President  
Housing Land Advocates  
info@HousingLandAdvocates.org

cc: jan.nordlund@state.or.us