



METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT
527 S.W. HALL ST., PORTLAND, OR. 97201, 503/221-1646

June 28, 1982

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EDITOR
The Oregonian
1320 S.W. Broadway
Portland, OR 97201

Sir:

Opponents of the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) are receiving considerable attention in their efforts to make our land use laws a scapegoat for Oregon's economic woes.

Development time equates directly to the cost of any project and delays in achieving permits or meeting regulatory requirements can frustrate efforts to minimize construction costs or achieve operational status in time to meet certain market demands or needs. The danger just now, in a time of economic stress, is the tendency to place blame on the inability to attract new industry or allow in-place industry to expand on Oregon's land use goals. In fact, the problem is greater with the procedures and we would make a grave error if we were to obliterate or weaken our goals in the process of attempting to improve procedures.

There are many factors which have created a stalemate in the economic health of the State. Among these are a

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Byzantinian tax structure, a federal fiscal policy which is undergoing reconstruction, and the after effects of "overheated" economic growth of the past decade. In fact, it is this last factor which has perhaps most directly led us to the present situation.

Actual land costs until recently were less of a consideration in locational decisions by companies eyeing development or expansion. Tax considerations, workers' compensation rates and labor costs were usually weighted more in corporations' decision to locate or expand business. As interest rates climbed, cost and cash-flow factors became a more significant factor in looking at long range profit possibilities. Speculators, holding land to be developed, find it increasingly difficult to sell their land.

These economic conditions while deplorable, are no reason to abandon our land-use goals. Unbridled growth, elimination of zoning and planning, could potentially offer short-term development stimulation but the long term effects would be devastating. Houston, Texas has never had zoning, but now that city is faced with chaos. In fact the City Council there recently imposed restrictions on development and the chairman of the City Planning Commission said . . . "we can't continue our growth pattern of the past 10 years without choking on ourselves."

This is the danger that faces Oregon now. Do Oregonians really want to dismantle a series of laws which have been passed to keep Oregon's unique character? I don't believe anyone really wants this, but in the stampede to try to achieve economic recovery, it could happen.

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Hopefully, as we examine ways to hang out the "open for business" sign we will do that by taking advantage of our land use laws rather than damning them. Certainly the processes need refinement. City and County processes cause the greatest delay in attempting to achieve timely development. The State Department of Economic Development and LCDC must work as advocates for those industries which wish to locate or expand business in Oregon. If the State can mandate goals, it can also place time limitations and review processes on permit requirements for a developer.

Hopefully our State leaders will not panic but will make a rational examination of the procedures and processes without damaging those fundamental objectives which make Oregon such a livable place.

Sincerely,

Mike Burton

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