



March 17, 2021

Mayor Sally Russell
Bend City Councilors
Delivery via E-mail

Mayor Russell and Council Members,

The Bend Chamber of Commerce is pleased to submit this letter in support of the Planning Commission recommendations before you this evening. The Chamber represents over 1,650 small and medium sized businesses through the City and the Central Oregon region, and one of the organization's overarching policy goals is to support solutions to address our housing crisis.

In December 2020, the Chamber submitted a letter of support for the City's Project Turnkey grant application to the Oregon Community Foundation, and we have followed the project's progression. We applaud the City for identifying new and creative solutions to help shelter our vulnerable populations, and appreciate the state investment and partnership in this project. With temperatures dropping below freezing on a regular basis, the need is acute. It is all too often that we see individuals and families enduring these challenging conditions as they seek access to limited supplies of transitional housing.

The Chamber's Advocacy Council and leadership team has reviewed the development code proposal for consideration and is supportive of the recommendations. The code changes will reduce barriers for developing transitional housing, and ensure standards for health and safety of residents of the new units, local businesses and the surrounding community.

We support the amendment adopted in the Planning Commission work session to remove a 1,000 foot separation requirement between a temporary housing facilities, and allow temporary housing as a permitted use in General Commercial and Limited Commercial districts without a conditional use permit. Reducing barriers to creating transitional housing is important, however we do have questions about how these changes will integrate into the larger plan for the Central District. The Chamber is actively engaged in conversations with developers, investors and other interested parties regarding the Central District development plan, and further dialog about the impact of these code changes is key to those discussions.

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It is also important to note that while the expedited timeline for consideration of code changes is understandable given the unique circumstances with Project Turnkey, it has created some unease amongst businesses that regularly engage with the City's development code. We urge City leaders to consider this sentiment in future planning.

The Chamber believes housing is a fundamental right, and although the issue of homelessness is challenging and multifaceted, we stand ready as a partner to take steps toward achieving that goal. Thank you for the opportunity to support the City's unique approach and we welcome ongoing dialog and partnership on the issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Katy Brooks
President + CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce

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