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Portland, Oregon 97213  
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Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission  
PSC Manufactured Dwelling Parks  
1900 SW 4th Ave., Suite 7100  
Portland OR 97201

Commissioners:

I am writing to provide evidence in favor of the proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code to preserve manufactured dwelling communities. My dissertation, funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, analyzed the closure of manufactured housing communities in Oregon during the housing boom of 2001-2007. I examined the scale and causes of closures, the impacts on residents, and the policy response of the Oregon legislature during the 2007 session. A full copy of the dissertation can be found here:

[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1303&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1303&context=open_access_etds)

Relevant findings are summarized below.

#### **Scale and Causes of Closures (Risk Analysis)**

- From 2001 through 2007, approximately 2,800 Oregonians were displaced when 69 manufactured dwelling communities closed. Most residents had low incomes, and many were older adults; nearly all were homeowners who thought that they lived in secure housing.
- The rise in value of developable land was the primary cause of closures.
- Closures were related to population growth. Each 1% increase in the annual growth rate of a county resulted in increasing the likelihood of closures in that county by a factor of 3.7.
- Manufactured dwelling communities inside the UGB were approximately five times more likely to close than those in rural areas outside the UGB.
- One of the reasons that a manufactured dwelling community is more susceptible to redevelopment than other types of improved properties is that a sale can occur at a lower price. This is because the land owner has less invested in improvements because s/he does not own the houses. In effect, the homeowners/residents absorb most of the cost of redevelopment through the loss in value of their homes. (Rent Gap Theory of redevelopment applied to divided asset ownership).
- If past history predicts future trends, this evidence suggests that manufactured dwelling communities inside the UGB in the rapidly-growing Portland area are at significant risk of redevelopment.

#### **Impacts on Residents (Displacement/Gentrification Costs)**

The findings below are based on an analysis of the impacts of the closure of the Thunderbird Mobile Club in Wilsonville in 2007. The community was home to working class retirees and families who were homeowners, as well as a small number of very low-income renters who rented their home as well as their space. I found the following kinds of impacts:

- Financial impacts
  - Loss of access to low-cost housing; increased housing costs.
  - Loss of their primary financial asset, their home, in most cases (59% of households).

- Loss of homeowner's improvements to the site (landscaping, carport, etc.)
- Moving costs (100% of households)
- Eight of 184 homeowners declared bankruptcy (4%) because they had an outstanding loan on their home but were unable to move or sell it, and thus defaulted on their loan.
- Nonfinancial impacts
  - Loss of independence: 6% of households moved into care center/assisted living and 2% moved in with family
  - Loss of community, a sense of belonging---"root shock"
  - Among older adults, evidence of relocation stress syndrome---anxiety, apprehension, increased confusion, depression and loneliness, as described in gerontological literature (Manion & Rantz, 1995; Walker, Curry & Hogstel, 2007)
  - Abnormally high mortality rate; 11 people died, resulting in an estimated mortality rate of 34.56 per thousand. The expected mortality rate per thousand for white adults aged 70 – 74 years old in the US in 2006 was 25.548 (Center for Disease Control, National Vital Statistics Report, April 17, 2009, Volume 57, Number 14, Table 3)

Manufactured housing communities provide a viable low-cost housing option in a city where such options are scarce. For older adults, they provide an opportunity to age in place in a community where the neighbors are keeping an eye out for you and where active living (walking, gardening, taking care of pets, etc.) is supported by both the physical and social environment. Manufactured housing community residents, many of whom would qualify for subsidized housing, contribute both a financial asset (their home) and their energy to creating and maintaining their home and community.

Based on the findings from my research, I encourage you to adopt the proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code that would help preserve 56 manufactured dwelling communities (more than 3,000 homes) in Portland.

I also encourage you to pursue coordination with other city bureaus that can also support the preservation of manufactured housing communities in the following ways:

- Funding/financing the voluntary purchase of communities by the residents (co-op model) or by a nonprofit or Home Forward.
- Funding/financing for cost-effective critical home repairs (e.g., roof, plumbing), weatherization and accessibility improvements (e.g., ramps, internal adaptations) to existing homes.
- Funding/financing for replacement of aging homes with new energy-efficient homes.
- Funding/financing for improvements to internal infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer systems, roadways) in return for guarantees of long-term affordability of space rents.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Cordially,



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