

Citizens have the right to decide on city's growth

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There are many issues that surround Canby's proposed annexation charter change, Measure 3-98, on the Nov. 4 election ballot.

Some people would fault the Canby City Council for placing this measure before its citizens and constituents. Wrong! The City Council, realizing that the expansion of the city limits into its Urban Growth Boundary will shape Canby's future, have returned their trust in the citizens that elected them.

Mayor Scott Taylor and the council should be commended for allowing the community an opportunity to decide this fundamental and important issue.

The Association of Oregon Realtors (AOR) and Oregon Building Industries Association (OBIA) have repeatedly mentioned in their campaign literature that the public has many opportunities to be involved in land-use decisions.

Well, this is half true. What they don't tell you is what their lobbyists are up to in Salem, and that money is no object to them.

In this last legislative session, more than 60 bills were introduced to do everything from amending to repealing Oregon land-use laws and, most importantly, citizen involvement. It is noteworthy that your City Council defended its charter, and your right to decide measure 3-98 under Home Rule, by helping to defeat Senate Bill 1137.

This legislation was sponsored by real estate agents and builders, and would have repealed city charter changes and made it illegal for citizens to vote on annexations. A number of additional bills limiting citizen involvement were passed, by far the worst being House Bill 3065, titled "Expedited Land Division." Under Section 8, the Planning Commission is instructed *not to hold public hearings* on subdivision applications. It is not just the citizens. Your Planning Commission, City Council and LUBA cannot be involved in an appeal, either. An appealing party must

s p e n d thousands of dollars and go directly to the Court of Appeals. So much for citizen involvement.

It is inconceivable to most responsible people that the impact to your schools cannot be considered while denying or approving a subdivision application by your city officials. Municipalities cannot charge System Development Charges (SDCs) as development pressures overcrowd existing facilities and force citizens to pick up the tab to build new schools to accommodate the kids that come with the subdivisions.

The legislation mentioned above was lobbied for, and passed by, the builders and real estate agents. They also successfully lobbied the Legislature to remove schools from the 1989 System Development Act. This has resulted in a huge public subsidy to building interests.

When Canby's state representative, Kurt Schrader, introduced legislation this past session to try to rectify the schools SDC issue, the builders and Realtors pulled out all the stops, effectively killing this legislation in the House.

Now, back to reality. There has been much said about "Saving Canby's Plan." This would infer that if citizens vote on annexations somehow this would destroy Canby's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Nothing could be further from the truth. Voting on annexations does not replace a city's comprehensive plan, it merely becomes an additional step at the end of the existing process, and it has already been established with a proven track record in other cities.

The current process is Planning Commission

Point
of View
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and public review, along with zoning and ordinance requirements and review by the City Council. None of this would change.

Another reality — Oregon is a desirable place to live. It is the state's livability and quality of life that is being marketed. Anything can be overmarketed. Affordable housing is determined by the marketplace. Some would have you believe that voting on annexations will drive up housing costs, yet their is no annexation vote on the Oregon coast or in Beaverton, Hillsboro, Lake Oswego and much of the rest of the state. Yet land and housing prices continue to go through the ceiling.

Out of control growth is occurring in many communities across Oregon. Taxpayers are being asked to fund new infrastructure to accommodate more traffic, crowded schools, crime prevention, among others. Are the average citizens able to make an intelligent decision on annexations and the impact on their communities?

The Oregon Supreme Court ruled that citizens have a fundamental right to be involved in the future growth of their communities by voting on annexations. There is not one aspect of society that growth does not impact — schools, water, sewer, libraries, parks, public safety, and much more. Growth offers opportunity and it also requires responsibility. Are these emotional issues? You bet!

The citizens of Canby will decide what responsibility they bear for the future of their community at the ballot box Nov. 4, and who can find fault with that?

Jeffrey R. Lamb is chairman of Oregon Communities for a Voice in Annexations. The Philomath-based group bills itself as promoting and protecting citizen involvement in land-use issues. It lists 14 member communities, including Canby.