

# Sherwood Takes Action to Protect Our Right to Self-Govern

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Last night, the Sherwood City Council voted unanimously to take an extraordinary step: we passed three resolutions calling for a **special emergency election this January**, giving our community the chance to decide on vital amendments to the City Charter that reaffirm Sherwood's right to govern itself.

## Why a Special Emergency Election?

We didn't take this decision lightly. Under Oregon law, cities can only call an emergency election when an immediate threat exists that would cause extraordinary hardship if delayed. In this case, the threat comes from **state laws passed in Salem that continue to chip away at local control**, particularly in how cities make land-use decisions and manage annexations.

Delaying these amendments until the next regular election could mean losing more of our home rule authority, the very principle that allows us to make decisions locally, with input from our residents, rather than being told what to do by the state.

## The First Amendment: Protecting Public Comment and Transparency

The first proposed Charter amendment enshrines Sherwood residents' right to participate in land use decisions. It guarantees that no major development (Type III or higher) can move forward without at least one neighborhood meeting and one public hearing before the City Council or its delegated body.

For smaller but still significant projects (Type II or higher), it requires mailed notice to everyone within 1,000 feet of the site, ensuring that those most affected have a fair chance to learn, speak, and be heard. These standards can't be overridden by state laws that limit public engagement.

### What Do “Type II” and “Type III” Mean?

When people hear “land use application,” it can sound like bureaucratic alphabet soup. But it really comes down to how big a change is being proposed and how much public involvement it deserves. Here's a simple way to think about it:

**Type II:** These are the smaller projects that fit within the city's existing rules. Imagine your neighbor wants to split a large lot into two, or build a duplex in an area where it's already allowed. City staff review the plans, make sure they meet code, and mail notices to nearby property owners so they know what's happening. You can submit written comments, but there isn't usually a public hearing.

**Type III:** Now imagine a proposal for a new apartment building, a shopping center, or a subdivision that could add dozens of homes. These are bigger decisions that shape traffic, schools, and neighborhoods. Type III projects require a neighborhood meeting so residents can ask questions early, followed by a **public hearing** before the Planning Commission or City Council. Anyone can testify, and the decision is made in a public forum.

So, when we say “Type III,” we mean the kinds of developments that could change how an area looks or functions—projects that deserve more than a notice in the mail. They deserve a conversation; they deserve input from our community. This amendment ensures those conversations always happen in Sherwood, no matter what the Legislature decides in Salem.

## The Second Amendment: Restoring Local Authority Over Annexations

The second Charter amendment (the third resolution passed last night) focuses on annexations, how Sherwood's city limits expand. The proposal makes clear that determining our boundaries is not just an administrative act, but a core expression of local self-government.

Why is this important? Because Salem has repeatedly passed laws, like SB 1573 (2016), that forced cities to approve certain annexations without voter approval. This amendment pushes back and restores local control over how and when Sherwood grows.

Some argue that state preemption is necessary to address Oregon's housing and homelessness crisis. But many cities, including Sherwood, have been doing their part to increase housing production without state mandates. In fact, until recently, Sherwood was the fastest-growing city in Oregon over the last 20 years, only recently surpassed by Happy Valley. Our community has consistently planned for growth through thoughtful, collaborative processes. Most notably, Sherwood worked hard with residents and regional partners to expand our Urban Growth Boundary by 1,200 acres to the west, creating space for new jobs, housing, and hospitality opportunities that will strengthen our local economy. We are doing our part—and we shouldn't be punished for that effort. I

It's also important to remember that cities don't build housing; developers do. What we need are tools, not rules, and partnerships, not mandates, to help create the much-needed housing our region requires. Those efforts must align with our community's shared vision for Sherwood's future.

## Controlling Our Own Destiny

These Charter amendments are not about opposing growth; they are about ensuring Sherwood grows **on our terms**, through open dialogue, fair process, and shared vision. From Sherwood West to our town center, we've shown that collaborative planning works. But without strong home rule protections, that voice could be silenced.

This January, Sherwood voters will decide whether to embed these values into the City Charter, locking in our right to self-govern and ensuring that future councils and future legislatures can't take it away.

We are sending a simple but powerful message: **Sherwood's destiny belongs to the people of Sherwood.**

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