

Testimony: Portland City Council
Quasi-judicial Hearing: Portland Art Museum Rothko Proposal
April 20, 2017

My husband and I have been members of the Portland Art Museum since sometime in the 1980's. The Madison Plaza has been my absolute favorite passageway in Portland ever since 1990 when I began my habit of using it several times a week – the views in each direction are unique – from the Congregational Church to the historic elm in front of the YWCA.

PAM's proposed Rothko "pavilion" would turn this priceless public passageway into a monolith blockage. Their proposed huge glass barrier does not say: "welcome, pass through on your way to...[whatever]". Rather it *communicates*: "This is a private space, you have to pay to come in here." It will certainly not suggest that this is a dedicated public right-of-way (and, at any rate, would be navigable only when PAM is open).

We understand PAM's desire to improve connectivity between their two buildings.

But this should NOT be done by **decreasing** the connectivity for the many people who live in the neighborhood, or come here to participate in its many cultural and social activities.

PAM's proposed decrease in connectivity directly contradicts the planning principles in Portland's new Central City 2035 Plan. Its Policy 3.8 on "Walking" states: "Encourage walking as the principal way to get around the Central City, with improved on-street and off-street infrastructure that enhances safety and *closes access gaps* [emphasis added] to areas within, and adjacent to, the Central City." Connectivity is stressed in many places in the Plan. The PAM proposal directly contravenes this principle.

There are other options to achieve PAM's objectives without blocking public access to a public "road." One of those would be a skybridge between the buildings, leaving permanent public access through the Madison Plaza.

I was distressed that the Downtown Neighborhood Assn's Board voted, in executive session (i.e. Association members were excluded), to support PAM's proposal. I attended that meeting, and was impressed by the nearly unanimous opposition of the attending residents to PAM's proposal. PAM presented the Rothko pavilion design as a done deal without ever having discussed it with Downtown residents, or indeed asked for their opinion.

My opinion is clear: I oppose both:

- closing the Madison Plaza passageway; and
- changing the existing street vacation ordinance

Thank you for considering my comments.

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