

April 19, 2017

Mayor Wheeler and Members of Portland's City Council  
Portland City Hall  
1221 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Portland, OR 97204

RE: State of Portland's Design Review Process

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners:

Please accept this letter as testimony in support of Portland's Design Review process.

My company, GBD Architects, has been practicing architecture in Portland's Central City since 1969. We have completed hundreds of projects, small to large, that have navigated the Design Review process before moving forward to construction. We have presented our projects to almost every Design Commission that has been appointed since the first Commission, introduced in 1982. We are actively engaged with the Commission today with six major projects that are currently in various stages of the queue for Design Review.

While a lot has changed during our 25-year history with the process, some elements haven't. Our volunteer commissioners, who graciously give their time to be protectors of our built environment, have always been charged with the very challenging task of being the final judge and jury on what qualifies for "quality" in the design of our buildings. This can be a daunting task, highly subjective in nature and often substantiated by opinion rather than fact.

Does the process work?

In my opinion, yes – it works. To borrow a quote from the upcoming DOZA report, "There is no question that Design Review has had a central role in guiding the high quality development that Portland is renowned for today." I couldn't agree more.

As aspirational as the design community might want to be about being in complete control of the design qualities of our projects – there is a powerful force out there, "the market", that is often pushing back every step of the way, demanding that we build it bigger, build it faster, build it cheaper. Design Review is one of the few tools we have to resist those forces. Design Review gives us the advantage we often need to push our projects to meet a benchmark of quality that the market by itself would not otherwise support.

Can the process be improved?

Of course, it can – in fact, the upcoming DOZA report does a good job of identifying elements of the process that can be improved. There is very little in that report that I would disagree with.

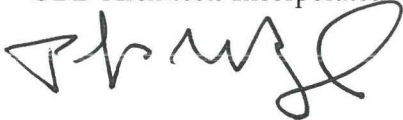
But let me be clear – Design Review is not broken. It is rather, overwhelmed.

Never in my 40 years of practice have we seen the intensity of development that we are still very much in the middle of, here in Portland. The impact has been a sudden transformation of our neighborhoods, bringing big city challenges that stretch far beyond how best to design our built environment. Will the intensity subside anytime soon? It seems unlikely given the demographic forces at work. If this proves to be true, it also seems that never before has the Design Review process been more important and that the process itself needs to be advanced to keep pace.

The intensity has caused the process to wander a bit from being efficient, in part because the Commission is being increasingly challenged to review conditions that are new to its purview, conditions that either don't have a precedent or that are simply not well articulated in our codes. Conditions like this, combined with a crushing caseload, suggest that change simply has to happen if the Design Review process is expected to keep pace with and, more importantly, continue to be a guiding force in the evolution of our City.

Please consider and support the upcoming DOZA report findings and, please, continue to support Design Review.

Sincerely,  
GBD Architects Incorporated

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Beyl', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Phillip M. Beyl, AIA  
President

# STATE OF THE CITY DESIGN REPORT

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

NAME (print)

ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE (optional)

Email

(optional)

✓ JOHN CARROLL

JCARROLL@CARROLL

Beyl

Investments. com

✓ PHIL BEYL

PHIL@GRDARCHITECTS.COM

✓ Tiffany Switzer

✓ John Russell (TIM HERON TO READ)

✓ Tad Savinar

h

✓ Julie Livingston

k

✓ Thomas Robinson

k

✓ Bob Hastings

ll

✓ Jeremy Kautel

NO Candera Stanke

~~Kristin Calhoun~~

## STATE OF THE CITY DESIGN REPORT

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

NAME (print)

ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE

(optional)

Email

(optional)

✓ NOEL JOHNSON		

**Parsons, Susan**

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**From:** Peter Fry <peter@finleyfry.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 17, 2017 6:31 PM  
**To:** Council Clerk – Testimony  
**Subject:** Design Review assessment project 2:00 pm April 19th.  
**Attachments:** design review.pdf

Attached

**Peter Finley Fry AICP, PhD  
Planning Consultant  
303 NW Uptown Terrace Unit 1B  
Portland, Oregon 97210  
USA  
cell (503) 703-8033**





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April 17, 2017

Mayor Ted Wheeler, Room 340  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, Room 210  
Commissioner Nick Fish, Room 240  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz, Room 220  
Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Room 230  
Portland City Hall  
1120 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: Design Review Overlay Zone Assessment

We appreciate the work of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Conceptually we agree with the recommendations, except for the recommendation to collate the special district design guidelines into one set of guidelines. The city is a construction of unique neighborhoods with individual characters. Design guidelines specific to Downtown or Lloyd District would not work in Central Eastside.

As the project is implemented; we offer the following considerations:

- 1) Central Eastside consists of distinct areas with edges: multiple use corridors abutting industrial sanctuary; Central Eastside abutting residential neighborhoods to the east; the OMSI areas, and individual properties abutting a proposed development. The guidelines need to help integrate new development into existing neighborhoods.
- 2) Applicants should have the right to choose a Type III process.
- 3) The guidelines are guidelines and not standards.
- 4) Street design needs to address the character of abutting uses.
- 5) Individual issues that are resolved through consensus or standards should be "boxed" and not reopened as other issue are addressed in the design process. Design compatibility standards could be developed for the "design" areas to allow a non-discretionary decision making process.
- 6) Developers need a certainty of concept and not required to keep searching for a solution.
- 7) The relationship between allowed height and floor to area ratio (bulk) determines the City's form. High heights and low floor to area result in tall skinny buildings. Low heights and high floor to area result in short bulky buildings. The choice is a tall City or one of monolithic buildings.

In the Central City Plan, we supported the expansion of design review into our district. Design review can be a positive process of collaboration if the goal is consensus.

Sincerely,

  
Peter Finley Fry, Vice-chair

Central Eastside Industrial Council Land Use and Development Committee

**CENTRAL EASTSIDE INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL**

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RUSSELL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, INC.

April 13, 2017

[HAND DELIEVERY]

Portland City Council  
c/o Mr. Timothy Heron, Senior City Planner  
City of Portland Bureau of Development Services  
Land Use Services Division, Design and Historic Review  
1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 5000  
Portland, OR 97201

Re: 2017 Design Commission State of the City Design Report to Capitol Council 041917

Gentlepersons:

I have a vested interest in the success of Design Review, because it was my idea when I was a member of Portland Planning Commission. The project that stirred us to action was the building now known as Congress Center, which in our opinion failed its responsibilities at the pedestrian level. At that time, we members of the Planning Commission had only three criteria for approval: height, floor area ratio and parking. I believed then, and I believe even more now, that in order to make certain that buildings that will last for a century or more are credits to the City, we need a more subjective level of scrutiny.

I've seen some wonderful examples of input by the Design Review Commission that resulted in dramatically better projects. In particular, the campus housing project at Fourth and Harrison initially turned its back on Pettygrove Park. In the course of several hearings, the building improved to the satisfaction of everyone, even, I believe, the developers.

Having said that, no matter how well a regulatory statute is written, there are inevitably exceptions that don't fit the rules. In the case of design review, I don't believe there are sufficient exceptions in the statutes that could save both the applicants and the City significant time and money. As a recent example, we are spending \$1.5 million on the reconstruction of the tenant improvements inside the Cushman & Wakefield offices on the terrace level of the 200 Market building. We considered recessing the doors to their outdoor terrace some 18 inches. Had we done so, we would have been subject to design review, and thereby the project would have been delayed for a minimum of eight weeks. We and the Design Review staff agreed that the change was both *de minimis* and invisible to the public, but the staff had no authority to approve it. In my opinion, the City's staff needs to be empowered to make common-sense judgments about the applicability of certain codes. The safeguard, I believe, is that the staff's

decision, although final at the time it is made, would need to be sent out via notice to the same group of neighbors who would receive notifications as part of the normal process.

I know most of the members of the Design Commission, and I admire each of them. The City owes them personally a great deal of thanks for the many hours of volunteer time devoted to make our City a better place.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JWR', is positioned above the printed name.

John W. Russell  
President