

October 22, 2017

To: Planning and Sustainability Commission
Map Refinement Project Testimony
Re: Change #1646

From: John Early and Laura Bender
330 SE 52nd Ave
Portland, OR 97215

Thank you for your time and attention; we understand you are citizen volunteers and we appreciate your service. Our concern is with change #1646, a split zone issue. To us this is more than a technical cleaning up of a map. It greatly affects what we have worked hard to create with our property which is adjacent to 344 SE 52nd Ave. We ask for your patience as we explain the context of the situation as we see and feel it.

We are two artists who settled in Portland 25 years ago in search of a progressive city that would support a creative life and family. Even before we signed a rental agreement on our first house in Portland, we had secured a studio space for our commissioned art business, Site Painters. Six years later we were able to consider buying a house. Top on our wish list was space to build a studio. We found a house with that potential but with a daughter to raise, it was 13 years before it was feasible to take on building a studio. We felt growing pressure to permanently secure a work space in light of continued gentrification of low-rent warehouse sections of the city. When all construction estimates for our project came in way over our means, several large unsolicited gifts from remarkable patrons made construction possible. The studio with excellent space, light, privacy, and quiet, was sited in our inspiring backyard garden and finally opened in 2015. We invested considerable retirement savings in a well-designed, durable, and very energy efficient structure that is compatible with nearby homes. A future owner could easily convert it into an ADU. In addition to our constant use of the studio, we have been able to offer art workshops, house concerts, tai chi classes, author book talks and several exhibitions of other artists. The studio, while our property, has become to some degree a resource and asset for the creative community at large.

We found this summer's postcard notification of the map refinement project very troubling as we researched the consequences of proposed map change #1646. Fundamentally we find it difficult to understand how this corner of SE 52nd Ave fits the definition of an R-2 designation. To quote the Planning Department's website, "R2 zoning will be applied near Major City Traffic Streets, Neighborhood Collector and District Collector Streets, and local streets adjacent to commercial areas and transit streets." Our block (almost all R-5) is a balanced blend of single family houses, duplexes, and several larger apartment courts, one and two stories high, a mixture of rental and owner-occupied. As we understand it, R-2 would permit a number of structures 40ft high on what is now a lot with a one-story house. We could face a towering wall only 5ft from our property line, entirely over-shadowing the potential of a planned solar

installation on our south-facing studio roof, reducing the growing potential of our food and flower garden, and ending the privacy and quietness of our backyard. The noise of cars coming and going from multiple off street parking spots on the lot and the bright, night security lights (we have seen as fixtures of similar constructions in the area) will further erode our quality of life. There are several mature shade trees rooted on our side of the property line whose canopy extends equally over both properties which would be endangered by new construction. Encouraging R-2 density of development would also insure the removal of a beautiful old walnut tree behind our neighbor's house.

Is there a solution? By keeping the present zoning, these outcomes could be prevented. The present zoning would still allow a second story and the building of an ADU, substantially increasing occupancy capacity on this lot. We are not attorneys, politicians, or city planners; there may be several other solutions that preserve what we value in our home and workplace (whose property tax is now greater than our annual mortgage payments.)

The city and region whose admirable planning goals of preserving countryside while developing diverse and balanced neighborhoods is in danger of losing its balance in the interest of rapid in-fill claimed to be needed to meet unsubstantiated population projections for year 2035. We need to respect and protect the investments and improvements current Portland residents have made over decades of time which collectively make the city so attractive and livable.