

West Tabor Subdivision Association, an Oregon nonprofit corporation  
care of Peter Fisk, Secretary, 520 SE 59<sup>th</sup> Court, Portland, OR 97215

Via email to [pssc@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:pssc@portlandoregon.gov)

October 24, 2017

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC)

**Re: Map Refinement Project Testimony, 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Change No. 1662)**

Dear PSC,

I write on behalf of the West Tabor Subdivision Association (WTTSA), an Oregon mutual benefit nonprofit corporation whose members are the owners of the ten homes in the West Tabor subdivision on Southeast 59<sup>th</sup> Court, immediately West of property recently transferred to the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) at 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We understand that the comprehensive plan designation and zoning of this PHB property at 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue may be changed by the map refinement project and subsequent related land use decisions.

After meetings of our members and consulting with counsel, we have strong concerns about the City of Portland's map refinement project and potential zoning and use of PHB's property. Accordingly, we are submitting this letter as testimony and comment on proposed changes to this site, including but not limited to the map refinement and the proposed zoning change from R5 to CM1.

On paper, this may look like a very good site for increased use. But based on firsthand familiarity with the area we have deep concerns regarding the intensity of use contemplated by a CM1 zoning and whether this site can support that intensity. For clarity, we do not oppose the addition of affordable housing to this site, which we have heard from sources including the current tenant is the PHB's ultimate intent. We recognize the critical need for affordable housing in Portland and commend the City for its efforts to find appropriate sites.

Nonetheless, we believe any housing and development on this site should be of a scale compatible to the neighborhood, street access, street safety, topography, and our homes. This is not an appropriate site for, by way of example, a large apartment building. We are very concerned about the negative impacts of such a development both on our neighborhood (SE 59<sup>th</sup> Court) and the wider neighborhood. We are satisfied with the current level of development and activity on PHB's property, but worried about what might come.

While we have a number of causes of concern, including loss of outdoor play space for children at the YMCA daycare and a lack of parking for increased development, the most prominent causes of our concern are:

### 1) Topography and Compatibility

The topography of this location amplifies the impact of building size on our homes. The entire Mt. Tabor vicinity is sloped, but our street is below a particularly steep bank from the property in question. The result is that even a one-story building is well above our homes. See Fig. 1 below showing current structure heights.

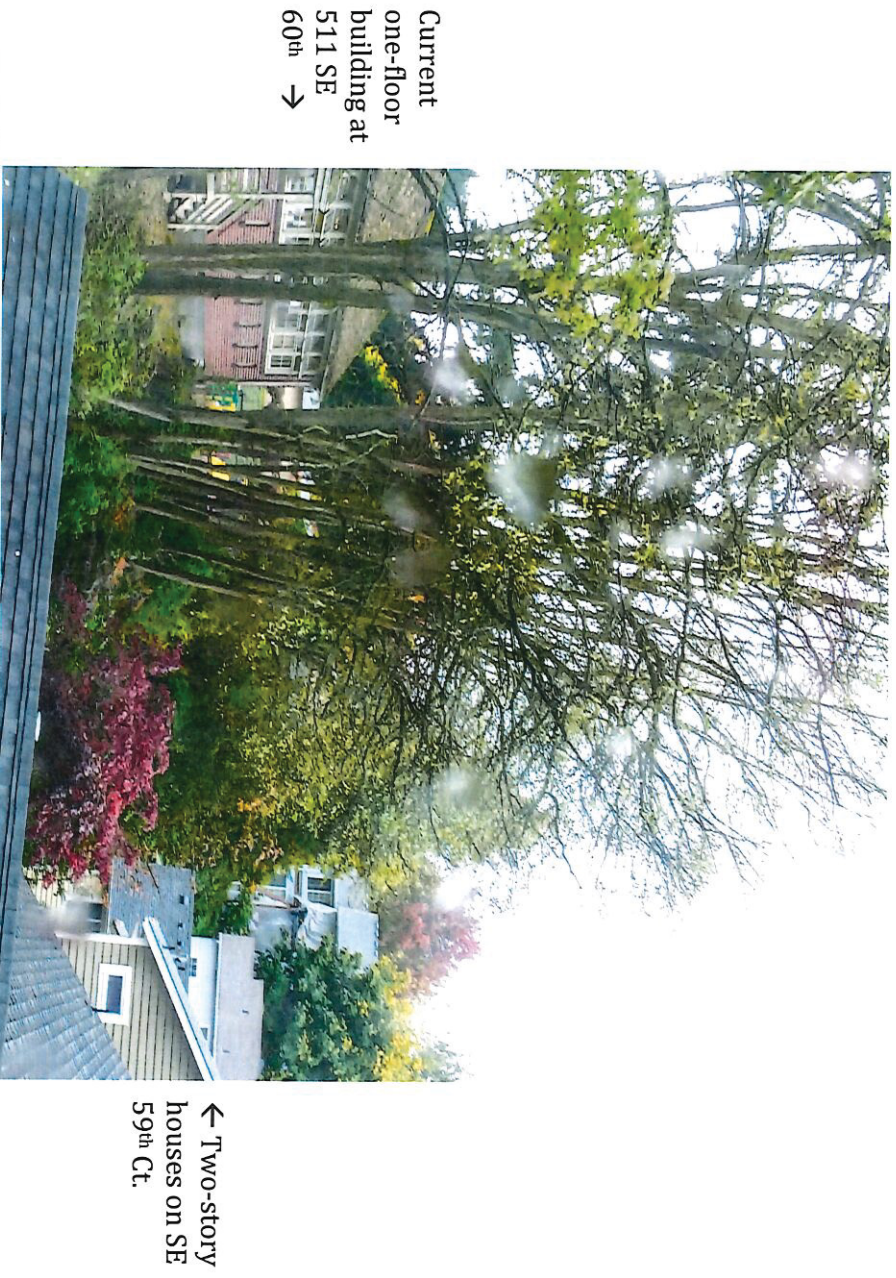


Fig. 1: The current 1-story building at 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue is at the left. The houses on the right are one and 2-story houses on SE 59<sup>th</sup> Court. The height difference and its impact is material.

The CM1 zoning and other mixed-use zones “require building heights to transition to the scale of adjacent residential zones....” Further, in the CM1 zone “[d]evelopment is intended to be pedestrian-oriented and generally compatible with the scale of surrounding residentially zoned areas.” (See *What’s the main difference between the current zones and the proposed zones?*, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/571013>; and *August 2016 Mixed Use Zones Project—Recommended Draft*, p. 7, available at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/588563>).

The height difference between 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the homes on SE 59<sup>th</sup> Court stands in the way of achieving these objectives. We fear that allowing further height on this site adjacent to our street will result in an imposing cliff wall of building towering over our homes.

## 2) Traffic Congestion and Hazards:

The property is on a street and at an intersection that are already both congested and dangerous. While serving as a motor vehicle commuting route to downtown and the freeway, limited lines of sight, steep inclines, a misaligned intersection, and narrow lanes make the streets here hazardous and difficult to traverse. Despite the proximity to Mt. Tabor Park, bicycle access is already impossibly hazardous on SE 60<sup>th</sup>.

Moreover, this is a major pedestrian commuting route for students and families at schools including Mt. Tabor Middle School, less than one block away across Stark; Glencoe Elementary, less than ten blocks away; Franklin High School, a little over one mile to the South; and the YMCA daycare located at this property itself. Accidents are frequent, including a recent incident of a car crashing into and through the walls of the YMCA daycare building on the property in question.



Fig. 2: Map of the vicinity (Source: Portlandmaps.com). 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Ave. is the property in the lower right labeled "Mt. Tabor Annex." Mt. Tabor Middle School is in the upper right.

### Our Position

- We have a cohesive and pleasant community here on SE 59<sup>th</sup> Court directly adjacent to and approximately two stories below the property in question at 511 SE 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- We have been content with the International School and Y's Choice daycare on this property. They serve the neighborhood and their impacts do not impair our enjoyment of our homes and community.
- A large building looming over our homes and community would be incompatible with our neighborhood and the greater neighborhood as a whole. It would impair our enjoyment of our homes and community by its gross incompatibility in size, scale, and mass, not to mention visual and aesthetic incompatibility. It would interfere with our solar access, fresh air, privacy, and views.
- A large building that mixes commercial use and housing, even if it is the YMCA with housing, would create more traffic, compounding the clear and present dangers of SE 60<sup>th</sup> Ave and the 60<sup>th</sup>/Stark intersection.
- The additional vehicle traffic to, from, and in and out of the property by residents and employees of a full-scale CM1 development would bring congestion on SE 60<sup>th</sup> and hazards at the intersection of SE 60<sup>th</sup> and Stark far beyond acceptable levels. It will be a matter of time until tragedy strikes.
- This property is fundamentally inappropriate for large-scale development for a multitude of reasons. It doesn't work for a large, mixed-use apartment building.

Please consider our concerns in making your decisions.  
Thank you.

Sincerely,  
  
Rita King  
President, WTSA