

**Testimony in Opposition to  
Proposed RH (2:1) Zoning Designation for Land  
Located in the Marquam Hill Commercial Node  
Adjacent to OHSU**

**FOR  
SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC RECORD**

**PORTLAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**

**OCTOBER 24, 2017**

## Introduction:

Today I am writing to provide testimony **against** adoption of the proposed zoning designation RH with a maximum FAR of 2:1 for land located the Marquam Hill Commercial Node adjacent to OHSU.

To be clear, the area in question is literally right across the street from OHSU on Marquam Hill (please see maps enclosed). As is well known and appreciated, OHSU is a regional teaching hospital and an incredibly valuable resource for the health and well-being for residents in the Portland area, the State of Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest. Moreover, OHSU's role as a leading medical research center makes it an institution of world-wide importance.

I am writing as a property owner who was himself a resident of the area for seven years, and as cancer patient at OHSU who fervently believes in and supports OHSU's precious mission. I am also writing for so many people who live in and use the area, people who are typically OHSU community members who, due to their extremely demanding work and class schedules, may not have time to involve themselves in a complicated land use matter such as this.

The current zoning designation for the land in question is CM, or Mixed Commercial; it has been in place for many years has a maximum height of 45', no maximum building coverage requirements, and very liberal setback requirements.

Last year BPS planning staff proposed a new designation CM1 with a maximum height of 35' and other features which further restricted or took away existing development potential.

In response to the proposal of CM1, which was clearly contrary to the goals and principals of the 2035 Comp Plan project, many interested people including myself offered testimony to the Portland City Council against this unnecessary and unjustified down-zoning.

It appeared that the Portland City Council agreed with us because the Council issued a directive which required planning staff to re-examine the issue.

However, planning staff's new recommendation is an inexplicable **further** down-zoning for the majority of the land in the node: planning staff now proposes for property currently zoned CM (or Mixed Commercial), the zoning designation of RH (2:1) which has a maximum height limit of 25' and which may limit some very important commercial development potential by right.

### **Marquam Hill and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Project:**

After carefully reviewing the Marquam Hill Plan (adopted in 2003), the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Guide, and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Early Implementation (Recommended Draft Aug 2016), we find no justification for the proposed down-zoning. In fact, these documents overwhelmingly support **increasing** development potential on Marquam Hill, not restricting it.

The 2035 Comp Plan Guide states that Portland can expect 260,000 new residents in the next 20 years. *Where are these people going to live? And do we want to increase possibilities for people to live close to work, thereby reducing traffic, traffic congestion, and vehicle miles travelled?*

**OHSU employs over 12,000 people on the Marquam Hill campus.** And this figure does not include employees of the VA Hospital, Shriners Hospital, nor does it include the many OHSU graduate and professional students, nor does it include OHSU patients and their families.

In light of the following circumstances, we believe that the proposed down-zoning will have an overwhelmingly negative impact on our neighborhood and on our city:

- Portland faces an unprecedented housing shortage
- Affordable housing in Portland is in increasingly short supply
- Marquam Hill needs more housing supply within walking distance to OHSU jobs and educational and treatment opportunities
- Marquam Hill lacks basic commercial services and amenities (no child care center serves families of OHSU employees on the Hill, for example)
- Citizens of Portland are concerned with increased traffic, especially during commuting hours
- Our planet faces massive environmental problems which necessitate reduction of carbon emissions

### **Employment Concentration at OHSU's Marquam Hill Campus:**

According to the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's publication "Central City 2035 Volume 1 Goals and Policies Proposed Draft June 20, 2016," the Central City area covers 'slightly less than 5 square miles' or slightly less than 3200 acres and accounts for 130,000 jobs.

By comparison, OHSU's Marquam Hill campus is 116 acres and employs 12,000 people. If we look more carefully:

- Central City has 130,000 jobs in slightly less than 3200 acres, or close to **40.625 jobs per acre**.

-- OHSU's Marquam Hill campus has 12,000 employees in 116 acres, or **103.448 employees per acre**.

That is, it clearly appears that OHSU's Marquam Hill campus represents a **more dense employment concentration** than the Central City Area.

While a professional economist or demographer might develop a more refined comparison, it is an undeniable fact that Marquam Hill has an extremely high concentration of jobs, not to mention educational and treatment opportunities to which citizens need better access through the development of more housing nearby.

### **Bureau of Sustainability and Planning Staff:**

For reasons which remain largely unknown to us, about this matter Planning Staff has been remarkably vague, unsupportive, and unsympathetic to our concerns despite many attempts to voice them.

Many area residents and property owners, myself included, have provided input in person at Planning Staff offices and by email, we have provided testimony, and we have both attended Neighborhood Association meetings and met with Association members outside of normally scheduled meetings.

Sadly, and somewhat frustratingly, we have repeatedly asked why this land is being so severely downzoned and we have yet to receive a straight or meaningful answer.

### **Homestead Neighborhood Association and the Traffic Question:**

Residents and property owners of the Commercial Node are largely in agreement with members of the Homestead Neighborhood Association about several key ideas related to this matter.

Homestead Neighborhood Association is concerned with reducing the number of single vehicle trips by OHSU commuters using neighborhood streets to drive to and from OHSU. The Association is therefore vehemently opposed to any zoning designation which would allow the development of new commercial parking business in the Commercial Node.

Unfortunately for all concerned, this has clouded the issue unnecessarily and probably led to planning staff making the very ill-advised proposal discussed herein.

None of the current ownership of property in the commercial node is remotely interested in ever developing new commercial parking business.

While it is true that property will eventually pass to new ownership in the future, the very steep terrain in the Node make it extremely unsuitable for the development of commercial parking business. If this land were flat and could simply be paved over in order to start renting out parking spots the Association might have a legitimate point.

However, Marquam Hill and especially the land in question here is quite steep and this means that even if development of commercial parking business were allowed by right, it would be such an expensive and difficult undertaking, we feel it is there no realistic chance of this **ever** coming to pass.

There is another critical aspect to the traffic question which must be brought to light. The West side of the Homestead Neighborhood, in which the Node is located, is lived in by an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of OHSU community members (such as hospital staff, grad students, medical researchers, patients). Naturally, living so close to the OHSU Marquam Hill campus, **nearly all of them walk or bike to work, class, or treatment each day.**

Therefore, if the housing supply immediately adjacent to OHSU were to increase, this will logically and naturally lead to a **reduction in vehicle miles travelled; VMT reduction** is clearly a 2035 Comp Plan goal and is something all of us should be unequivocally supporting.

Be that as it may, the Association is generally in agreement with Commercial Node residents and property owners that A) commuter traffic should be reduced and that B) considerably more residential and light commercial development (such as child care and a small grocer such as Green Zebra Grocery, for example) are valuable and should be encouraged and supported.

That is, the goals of area residents and property owners and those of the Association are not opposed to each other.

If Planning Staff wishes to accommodate Neighborhood Association fears concerning the possibility of future development of commercial parking business, that is fine; however, **Staff is obligated use a plan district, an overlay, or other planning tool to accomplish this so that the important and wise goals and principals of the 2035 Comp Plan project are adhered to and not ignored.**

#### **Future development challenges and needs:**

We envision future development in the Node being mostly residential use with some light commercial amenities (such as child care service and perhaps small grocer such as a Green Zebra Grocery), if possible.

The housing sector most in need would primarily serve graduate students, medical researchers, hospital employees and support staff, and of course patients and their families. The OHSU School of Nursing (with over 1,100 students) is located 100 yards from the Node, for example.

We favor environmentally progressive architecture and building concepts and techniques such as **passive house design principals** (for ultra-high energy conservation or efficiency). And we favor providing as much off-street parking as possible.

Unfortunately, due to economic realities related to the high and increasing cost of construction in Portland, and due to the steep terrain in Commercial Node, the current re-zoning proposal will likely lead, effectively, to a building moratorium for the foreseeable future, if approved.

A 25' maximum height restriction (meaning two stories) for the majority of the land in the node is shockingly inappropriate. For example, the R1 zone on the West side of the Node (and further away from OHSU) has a 45' maximum height limit.

To be clear, most of the property in the node currently has a basic level of development. If sufficient incentive to re-develop is not present moving forward, it simply will not happen and that will be a real shame.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:**

Portland faces a severe shortage of affordable housing and the Marquam Hill area in particular needs more affordable housing for OHSU support staff, graduate students, and patients.

Restricting development potential in this area is clearly socially regressive and is environmentally unacceptable.

Limiting maximum height to only 25' or two stories is an example of surprisingly unsound planning. The current proposal is **NOT** supportive of 2035 Comp Plan goals and principals.

We believe that a **CM2 designation** would be acceptable instead of the proposed RH (2:1) for land currently zoned Mixed Commercial (CM).

Alternatively, one architect we know suggested a **CM1 designation, provided it comes with an urban center overlay and a 45'-55' maximum height and 4:1 FAR.**

Although we are reluctant to see socially valuable *commercial* development potential lost, we believe that an **RH designation with 4:1 FAR** (65' max height) may be a compromise worth accepting (RH zones prohibit commercial parking and therefore would be acceptable to the Neighborhood Association).

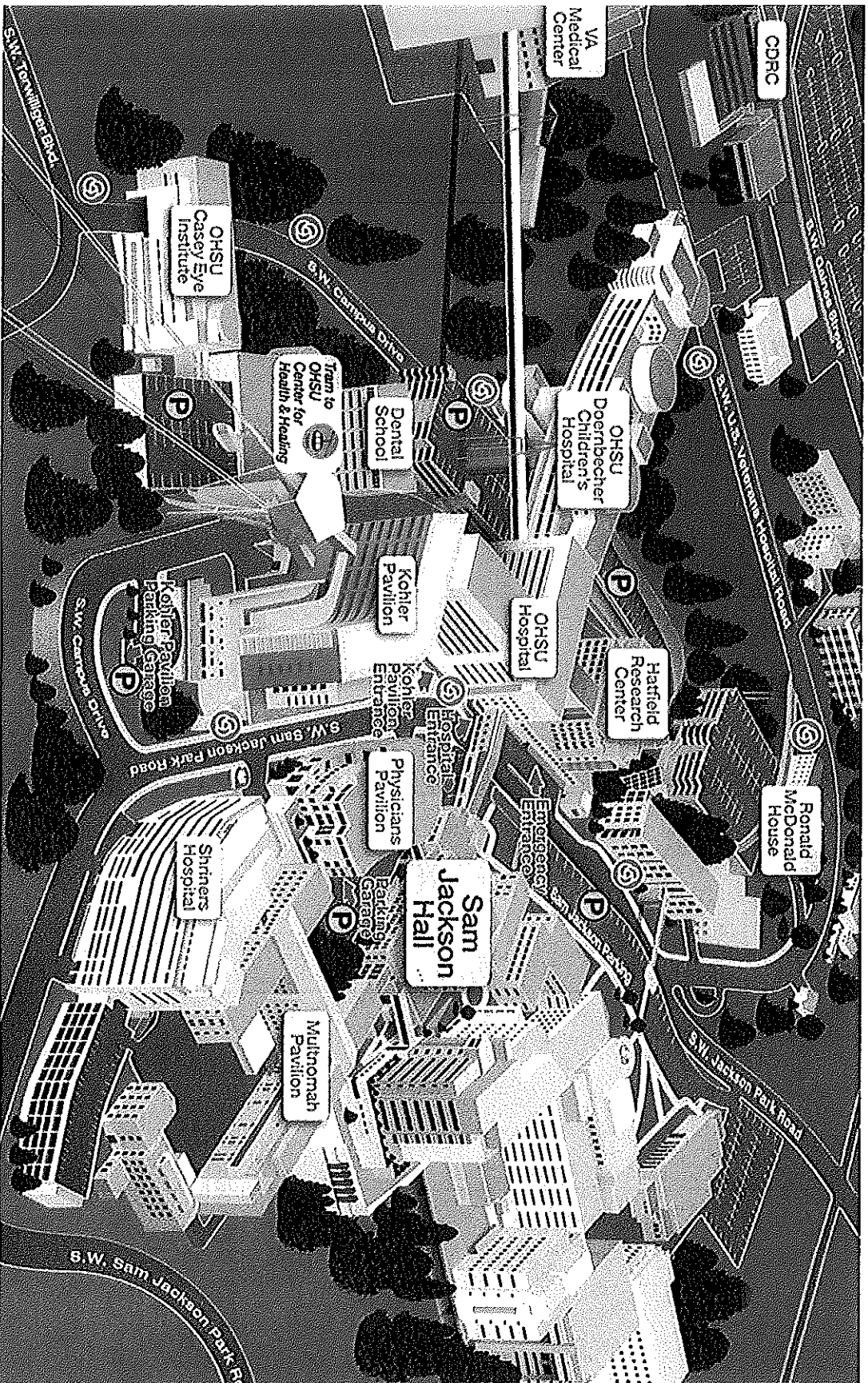
The current proposal is unjustifiable and is unjust; we respectfully urge you to reject it, despite whatever ill-conceived justifications Planning Staff may use to persuade you otherwise.

We respectfully ask you to require that Planning Staff continue to work on this matter until a resolution can be found which adequately addresses the concerns mentioned in this testimony.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me should the need arise.

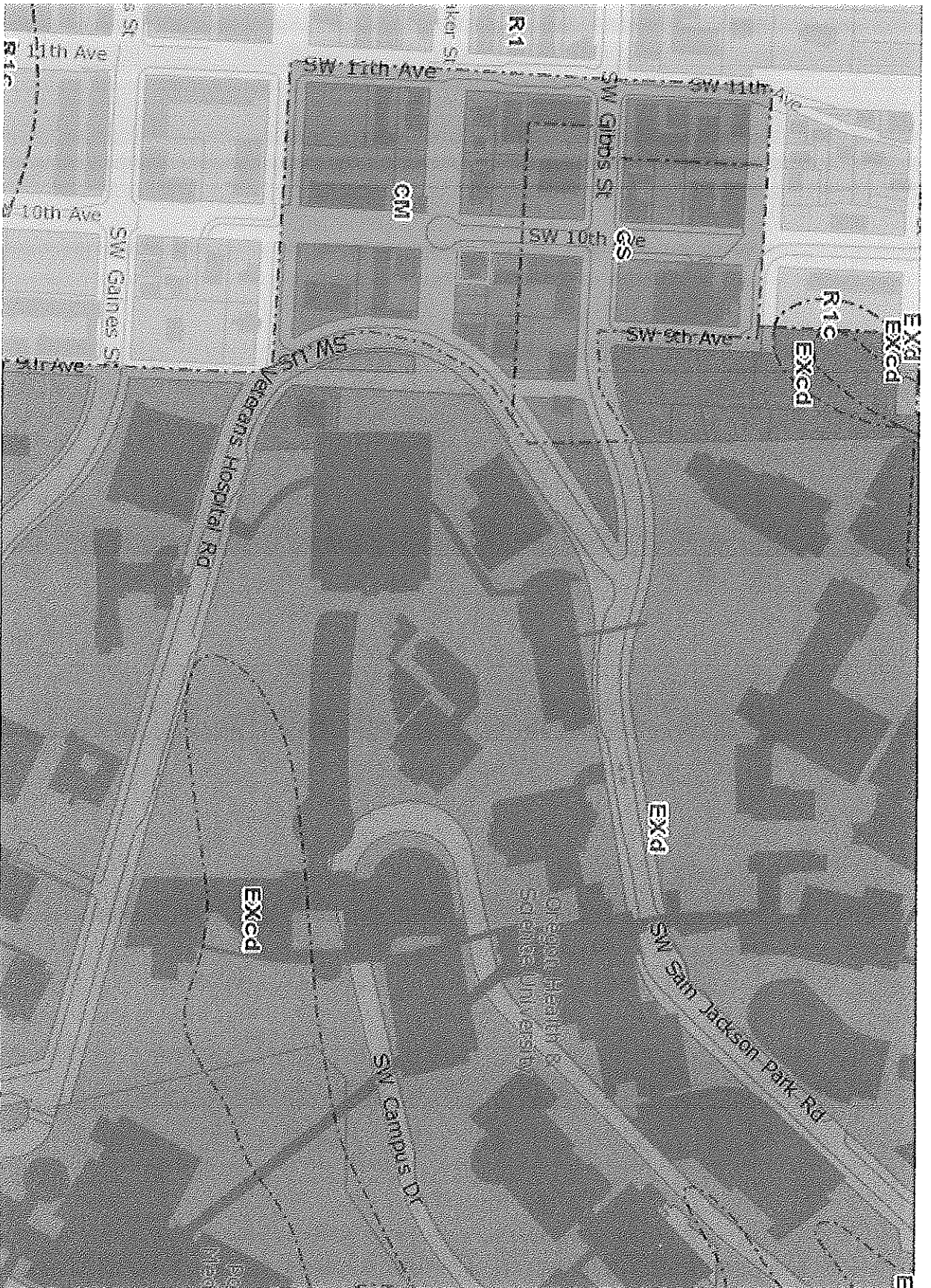
Brian Dapp  
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Portland, OR 97239  
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OHSU's Marquam Hill Campus employs over 12,000 people:

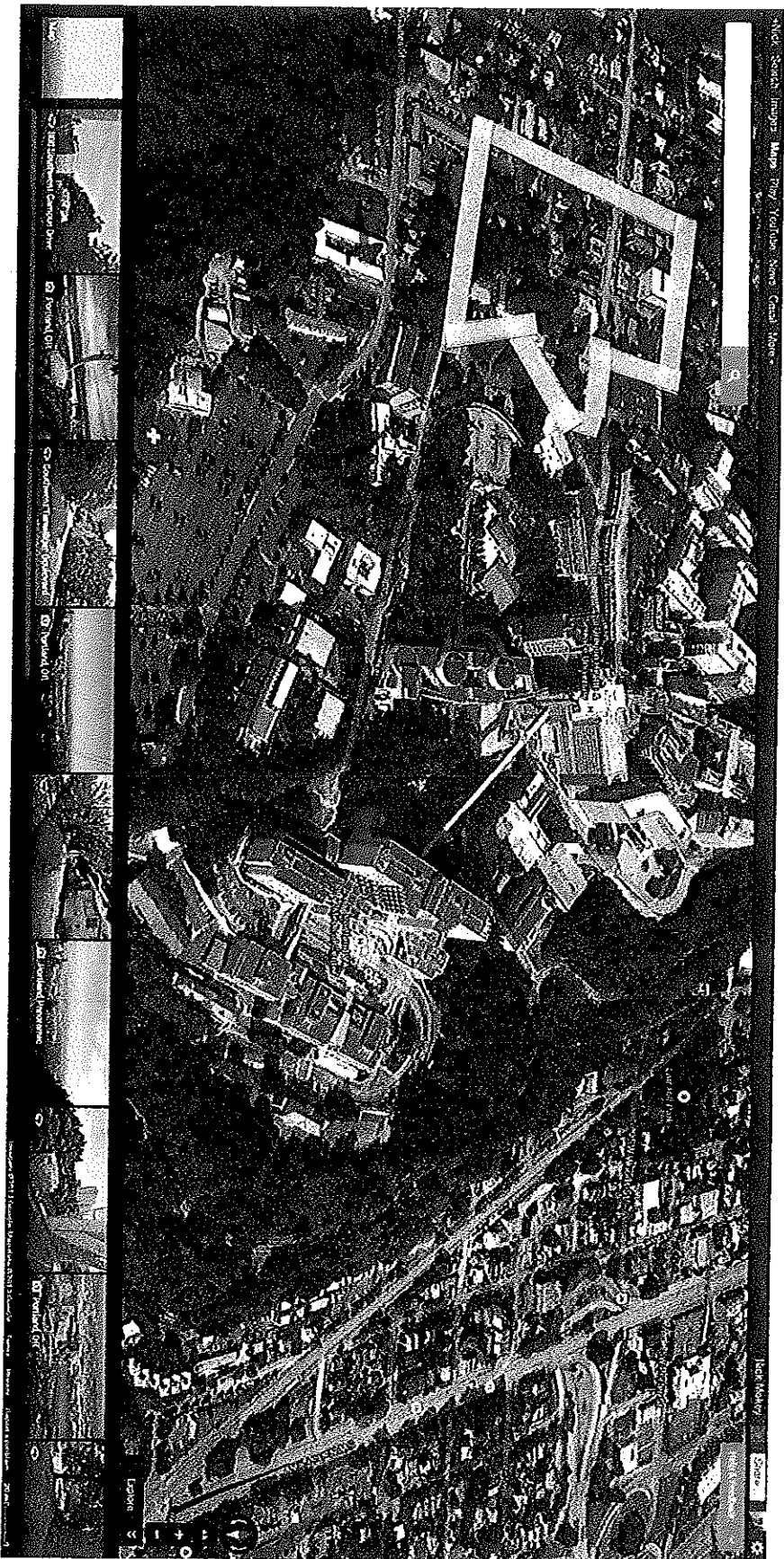




## MARQUAM HILL COMMERCIAL NODE ZONING MAP (Node shaded in RED):



OHSU MARQUAM HILL CAMPUS (Marquam Hill Commercial Node located below inside white borders)



## **EXHIBIT A - Letters**

The following letters were written by a small sample of people who concerned about the down-zoning of the Marquam Hill Commercial Node adjacent to OHSU. These particular letters were written in Fall of 2016 for submission to the Public Record when the matter was under consideration by Portland City Council.

Voices represented in these letters are very typical of the hundreds or even thousands of people who in the future will be negatively impacted by the proposed down-zoning of the Node if it is approved.

October 14, 2016

Honorable Mayor Charlie Hale and Portland City Council  
City Hall  
Portland, Oregon

Dear Mayor Hale and City Council Members,

I work as a post-doc Neuroscience researcher in Department of Pediatrics at Oregon Health Sciences University. I am living here in my first year as a visitor to Portland from my home country of South Korea. I plan to stay here at least four more years.

I live on Marquam Hill at SW 10<sup>th</sup> Ave and SW Gibbs, which means that I can walk to my laboratory in less than five minutes. I like to walk to work because it saves me time and I don't have to worry about parking. I live so close to my office at OHSU that I can even walk home to move my laundry from the washer to the dryer.

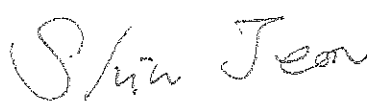

I am writing today to express my strong support for more housing and more services on Marquam Hill. More people need possibility to live by OHSU, that is my opinion.

Also, I think there should be more housing near OHSU so that more people can walk to work, like I do every day.

If we can have a small grocery store on Marquam Hill, this can be very convenient for me. If we will be fortunate enough to have more cafes and restaurants on Marquam Hill, this can be even better for me.

Thank you very much for thinking about this.

Sincerely,

Shin Jeon, PhD.  
Department of Pediatrics  
Oregon Health Sciences University  
Portland, Oregon  
Tel. 503 208 0291  
[leons@ohsu.edu](mailto:leons@ohsu.edu)

Portland City Council,

My name is Alyssa Shibley and I am 22 years old, and I have lived in Oregon my entire life. I was born in Portland and grew up in Wilsonville. Inspired by the empowering and caring nurses in my life, I decided to pursue a career in nursing. I was recently accepted to my dream school and am two weeks into nursing school at OHSU. In the future, I hope to be able to continue the legacy of the nurses that inspired me and give back to the community as a nurse.

Growing up only 30 minutes outside of Portland gave me the option to commute to school every day. However, I was fortunate enough to be able to find housing on Marquam Hill. I began my search almost immediately after I found I was accepted to the program. Since I grew up in the area, I knew it would be challenging to find a place to live on the hill. After months of searching I was miraculously successful. Because of this, I enjoy walking to class every day, and I no longer need my car. In fact, I have left my car at my parents' home in Wilsonville, and am considering selling it because I no longer use it. Some of my classmates were not so lucky. I hear from my colleagues every day about their struggles of commuting to school. Their commutes seem terrible, some spending nearly three hours a day travelling two and from school.

As a native Portlander, I too cherish the historical and traditional aspects of Portland. However, the OHSU community would benefit tremendously from the developmental possibilities of expansion. This would include housing for doctors, teachers, students, nurses, families of patients, and many more. Additionally, it would enhance the community and bring critical resources such as groceries within walking distance. Because of the amazing hospitals on the hill, some families travel far away from home to be able to receive care. I think that development would benefit those families greatly because it would provide temporary housing for them as well as other resources. Overall, I believe that if there were more housing available for OHSU students, teachers, and healthcare providers, there would be a reduction in traffic because less people would need to commute every day. Thank you for your consideration.



Alyssa Shibley  
Accelerated Bachelors in Nursing Class of 2017

The views expressed here are my own and do not reflect the views of Oregon Health and Science University or the School of Nursing.

**From:** Shanti Ersson

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 02, 2016 5:32 PM

**To:** 'mayorhales@portlandoregon.gov'; 'amanda@portlandoregon.gov'; 'novick@portlandoregon.gov'; 'dan@portlandoregon.gov'; 'nick@portlandoregon.gov'; 'cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov'; 'mixedusezones@portlandoregon.gov'

**Subject:** Development potential of Marquam Hill at OHSU

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a social worker at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and Doernbecher Children's Hospital. Because OHSU is **one** of only two Level I Trauma Centers in the entire state of Oregon, many of the families that I work with come to our hospital from outside the Portland Metro Area.

I work primarily with pediatric patients so much of my job includes helping the parents of these children with housing and other community resources like transportation and food, when they are displaced from their homes due to a child or family member that comes to our hospital for acute care.

It is a huge financial burden on families when their infant, child, or other family member suddenly needs to redirect their medical care to OHSU. Often times these families are coming in the middle of the night with just the clothes on their back and with no resources to help them transition to a potentially long term stay in the Portland area.

In addition, many of our families and patients are on Oregon Health Plan (OHP) Medicaid and often times come from low socio-economic status, which makes their need for **accessible** and affordable long term housing and other resources that much more critical.

Limiting the future zoning potential of Marquam Hill adjacent to OHSU would significantly and directly impact the patients and the families that we work with. Loss of development potential would mean less ability to create affordable housing, community and commercial amenities and services such as childcare, places to eat and places to buy food. These are basic amenities that are currently not accessible to many of our patients and their families. Furthermore, allowing these kinds of developmental projects on Marquam Hill would significantly decrease the amount of automobile (in the form of cars, cabs, Ubers, buses and shuttles) that are constantly transporting patients and families down the hill to places where they can access these amenities and services.

In the mission to best serve not only our patients and their families, but the thousands of employees that also work on this campus, I ask you to please consider the information in this email. Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important and urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Shanti Ersson, CSWA  
Medical Social Worker

October 11, 2016

The Honorable Mayor Charles Hale  
Portland City Council Members

My name is Patricia Glazier. Presently I am a retired Family Nurse Practitioner. I pursued my education at OHSU. As an undergraduate nursing student I lived on Marquam Hill. As I did not possess a car in those days, living close to where I attended class made my life much simpler.

Even in the 1970's when I first attended OHSU, many people who lived on my street were either students at the various schools or employees of either the hospital or the university itself. Even then, the "Hill" could have used more housing as people were always looking for places close by that were affordable.

In this day of a seemingly steady stream of people moving to the city I believe it is prudent to thoughtfully plan for additional housing options close to where people work and/or study. With Portland streets already clogged it seems obvious to curb automobile traffic whenever possible. This is especially true of Marquam Hill given the limited access as well as the many jobs, educational programs and treatment options that OHSU offers.



Designing neighborhoods that boast thoughtfully planned varied housing may enhance the city. If Marquam Hill does increase its density it would make sense to include additional much needed amenities such as grocery and child care in a plan making the neighborhood even more liveable for all.

I urge you to give careful consideration to allow additional and needed amenities + housing in this already vibrant and thriving area of Portland.

Sincerely,

Patricia Mazzer, C-FNP retired.

BSN 1977

MSN 1984



To the Honorable Mayor Charles Hale and the Portland City Council

My name is Jason Greyslak and I am a 2014 graduate of the Oregon Health and Sciences School of Dentistry. During my education at OHSU I lived nearly exclusively on Marquam Hill. The reason for this was for several reasons. First and foremost was quality of life. By living on the hill I was not forced to endure lengthy daily commutes that many of my classmates dealt with. This not only minimized transportation costs (fuel, increased maintenance on my vehicle), but maximized time I was able to spend with loved ones. A five minute leisurely stroll to my apartment was much more enjoyable than battling Portland traffic day in and day out. I was also able to come home for lunch which was a great way to decompress from the stresses of a rigorous graduate program. When I would return from lunch I was better suited to treat my patients having had time to collect myself. Second, was access to affordable housing. The housing situation has become significantly more constricted since my time at OHSU, but even then there was very limited housing options for students on a tight budget.

It has come to my attention that there is a proposed zoning change that would not only discourage development on Marquam hill, but possibly change the current regulations to a more stringent set of criteria. I strongly believe this is a step in the wrong direction. By encouraging development on Marquam hill we enhance the potential for growth of the entire University. OHSU is a world class institution on the cutting edge of many budding fields of research. By limiting housing access to not only students, but researchers, physicians and even patients requiring long term care on Marquam hill we truly are keeping OHSU from reaching its true potential. Personally, I know many individuals who chose not to live on the hill due to the limited options for essentials such as groceries or child care.

I would encourage the city to promote responsible development on Marquam hill. By increasing affordable housing options and access to day to day essentials we help to build a more resilient university. One that is less susceptible to the ever growing housing shortage in Portland that is certainly forecasted to get worse. Thank you for your time and I hope you consider increasing development on Marquam Hill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Greyslak DMD".

Dr. Jason Greyslak DMD, MS  
OHSU Class of 2014