



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
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## Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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March 24, 2020

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Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners:

The Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) enthusiastically offers our support for the Expanding Opportunities for Affordable Housing project, currently scheduled to come before Portland City Council on May 14, 2020.

Numerous community-based organizations testified about how critically important these zoning amendments are to enable them to move forward on various pending housing developments. That is why the PSC urges you to approve the proposal without delay.

At the hearing on February 11, 2020, the PSC heard testimony from 33 individuals, all of whom expressed support for the proposed Zoning code or map changes. The PSC met on March 10, 2020, to deliberate, and Commissioner Magnera moved to “recommend the “Expanding Opportunities for Affordable Housing” project as amended, authorizing BPS to update the report and commentary to reflect PSC’s discussion, and to translate the recommended multi-dwelling designations to the recently adopted Better Housing by Design zoning nomenclature, and forward it to City Council.” Commissioner Houck seconded. The motion received unanimous approval with 9 yes votes.

The zoning code and map amendments proposed by this project are intended to help remove regulatory barriers for faith and other community-based organizations that wish to develop affordable housing in the future. All testimony to PSC was in support of the code changes, which in many cases will exempt institutional uses on conditional use sites from having to navigate the conditional use review process to build housing. When the criteria for the exemption is not met, the level of review for such projects will be streamlined and reduced (from a Type 3 to a Type 2). Several of the institutions testifying are actively working to advance affordable housing projects on their sites and are eagerly awaiting Council adoption of these code changes.



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1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 7100, Portland, OR 97201 | phone: 503-823-7700 | fax: 503-823-7800 | tty: 503-823-6868

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The PSC made minor amendments to the proposal, which included:

- Expanding the allowance to use up to 50 percent of a site's parking area for the development of housing, regardless of proximity to frequent transit, rather than restricting the allowance to areas close to frequent transit.
- Exempting sites with institutional uses from several specific Property Line Adjustment regulations.

In its deliberation of the 21 Zoning map amendments proposed, the Commission discussed the one request by a single property to change the zoning on their property. While several Commissioners were sympathetic to the request, the majority voted against it because they did not want to make an exception for individual situations, which they felt is more of the purview of City Council. The project had been scoped as an opportunity for community-based organizations to refine zoning to facilitate housing. It was not intended as an opportunity for the wider public to suggest zoning refinements. The Commission encourages City Council to allocate resources in the BPS budget for periodic zoning map updates, for specific areas of the city or with topical themes as appropriate. The high cost of quasi-judicial zoning and comprehensive plan map amendments is a barrier to many people. We would like to see BPS bundle community-requested changes together legislatively on a periodic basis, where there is a public benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of this project and for considering our recommendation.

Sincerely,



Eli Spevak  
Chair

