

Mark Linehan

#299521 | May 5, 2021

Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Design Overlay Zone Amendments, Recommended Draft**

I'm writing to urge you to reject the proposed DOZA changes because they loosen design standards in ways that will result in a more anodyne city, one that gradually loses what makes Portland special. You can see what I'm talking about by walking along the new construction on Division Street. • By allowing buildings up to 75 feet tall without design review, DOZA permits developments that are not in character with most existing structures along Division, Hawthorne, and similar "main streets". Buildings that high in the central city require design review. Why is a higher threshold applied in the design overlay zones? • By allowing buildings up to 40,000 square feet without design review, there will be, in effect, no design review required of most commercial buildings within the design overlay zones. As a point of comparison, the New Seasons store on Division at SE 20th is 36,650 square feet. If a new retail store like that were proposed on Division Street, the city should formally review it and neighbors should have the opportunity to comment. The threshold required for review should remain at 20,000 square feet. The Portland Main Streets Design Initiative is a multi-year effort by qualified designers and planners to identify and document the features that make Portland commercial streets attractive to citizens and visitors. The effort has gained wide support from multiple neighborhood and business associations. Yet the proposed DOZA standards ignore the Initiative. For example, the Main Street Design Initiative identifies chamfered (diagonal) corners as one of the common features of older Portland buildings, yet this feature is not called out in DOZA table 420-2 "Building Massing and Corners". By ignoring established, documented aspects of existing Portland structures, DOZA abandons its stated goal of "build[ing] on context". By ignoring the work of the Main Street Design Initiative, DOZA does a disservice to Portland in general and to the many groups that support the Initiative. I'm not against new buildings, even large ones, if they are designed to complement and build upon Portland's existing built environment. It's clear from many recent examples that we can't count on developers to achieve that. We need a design review process that truly applies context and that provides for appropriate input from citizens. We need recommendations from the Main Street Design Initiative to be incorporated into the proposed design standards. In summary, I ask you to reject DOZA and send it back to BPS and BDS to rework the proposal with these points in mind. -----

Mark H Linehan

Testimony is presented without formatting.