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Signal Pole locations and conflicts with Design Guidelines and Standards 5-6-21
Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners:

In light of the DOZA project discussion, I would like to point out that a few new signal poles get in the way of good pedestrian environment, and reduce the amount of housing that can be built in Centers and Corridors, on High Frequency Transit, and in High Opportunity Neighborhoods.

The proposed DOZA Guidelines (#C5) call for “the sidewalk level of buildings to be comfortable, pleasant and human scaled.” An important element is awnings that “protect passersby from rain and can create a sense of entry.”

The Standards incentivize corner entries (#C1) with one option to be “a main entrance... within 15’ of the two ...street lot lines”. The base zone allows balconies to count toward required outdoor space.

This building at 2910 SE Division fulfills both criteria, with a broad awning on two streets, and an entrance that is inviting from Division and from 29th Ave. And, as allowed, some upper stories project over the sidewalk, providing more housing space as well as rain protection.



But this complete arrangement of projecting building, awnings and entrance can be made impossible by signal pole placement.

PBOT's Manager of Signals and Lighting, Peter Koontz, advocates nationally for better bike and walking infrastructure, and does a good job of locating poles where they're not in the way of other uses, usually out by the curb, and. But in a few recent Portland cases, pole locations are problematic. I realize Mr. Koontz and staff are balancing cost of poles, location of other utilities, including other poles, and costs to do temporary signals, with desire to have the best pedestrian environment. But, I believe PBOT should be given stronger direction by Council to locate poles where they do not interfere with other city goals, in the valuable spaces on our corridors:

Here is the SW corner of SE Division and 34th. Instead of a pole in the usual position by the curb (where Portland's Pedestrian Design Guide indicates), the new "Mast Arm Pole" is located at the back of the sidewalk, in order that its arms will clear a power pole.

As you can see, the pole does not interfere with the current parking lot patio....



But when a new building is built at this corner, corner doors will be restricted, awnings will be forbidden, balconies won't be possible, and potentially 400 sq. ft. of projecting housing will have to be forgone, because of this pole location:



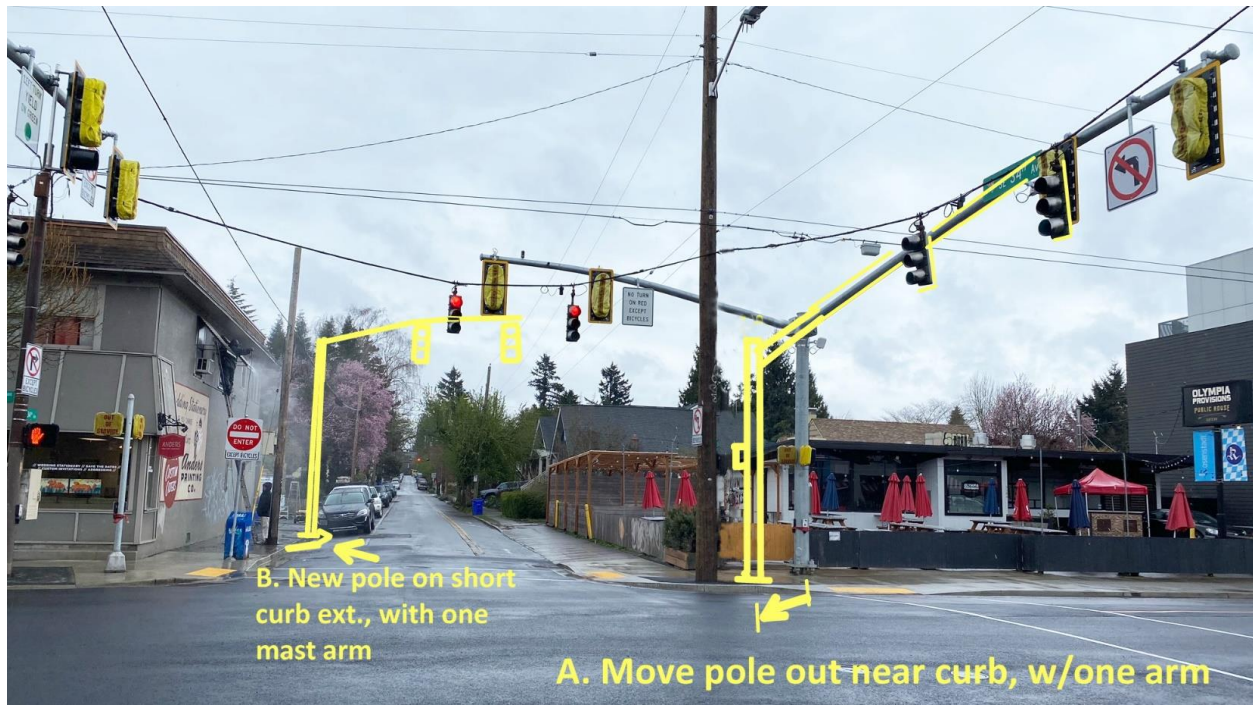
Buildings (w/ balconies and awnings) are allowed to project over the Right of Way, especially the sidewalk. But that will be impossible at this corner, with a resulting loss of housing or outdoor space. The pole interferes with an entrance location near the corner, and awnings are not possible at this entrance point, or

at the corner:



How could this have been avoided?

One possibility, which I'm sure staff considered, would be to move the current pole out near the curb, and eliminate the smaller arm (which would now hit that power pole) Put a second pole to replace the arm, on 34th Ave, perhaps on a 2' curb extension, which would save sidewalk width and possibly not require a new catch basin.



Yes, this would add the cost of a second pole, with the base foundation and wiring to that new location, and the curb extension. These are costs that should be weighed with other city goals of more housing in High Opportunity locations, rain protection, and more successful buildings. The great majority of new poles being installed today are nearer the curb (like these two poles at SE Ankeny and Martin



Luther King:)



...which preserves the possibility of new buildings built to the back of the sidewalk, allowing efficient use of private land for housing and businesses, and providing useful walking space. I am writing to point out that PBOT needs the funding and direction to design with more flexibility to preserve these important goals on all our major streets while continuing to upgrade signal installations.

Thank you