

Eliot Kahn

#299590 | May 10, 2021

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

I'm a young business owner who moved to Portland a few years ago and just celebrated my one year anniversary of owning my first home. I moved to Portland specifically to start a construction company to build affordable, sustainable housing. As a new member of the community trying to establish my family and life here, this is a very personal matter to me because I am in the cohort of people most affected by changes like these. Like many of my generation, without affordable housing of all types, I would not be able to get started on the path of home ownership and wealth generation. The same path that many who oppose DOZA followed years ago and now get to enjoy the benefits. We are not pushing to add multitudes of huge, ugly skyscrapers all over the city -- what we are fighting for is to have the same opportunities as generations before us had. That starts with affordable housing. As an affordable housing developer, I can say, without any qualms, that objective systems not only improve the access to affordable housing, but provide developers more opportunity to build. Being forced to follow the subjective whims of whoever happens to be the loudest voice in the room for any given area, which can often lead to year-long delays, makes the development of quality affordable housing much, much harder to contemplate. Many developers, foreseeing that long and arduous road just to get a design through, would just opt out. That is not the sign of a functional system, that is a detriment to all. I support DOZA, as it would help more people live in great neighborhoods like Alberta, Belmont, Division, Hawthorne, Hollywood, Interstate, Kenton, Kerns, Lents, Mississippi, Sellwood, Slabtown, St. Johns, & Williams. When moving here our first preference for places to live was in St. Johns, to the point that me and my wife got married under the St. Johns bridge just last year. Had affordable housing been available there, we would have chosen to live there in a heartbeat. I encourage Council to listen to affordable housing developers who support the clear and objective Design Standards, which will make it easier to add affordable housing to those neighborhoods. Portlanders of all incomes should be able to live in our amenity-rich neighborhoods. I strongly support the Portland: Neighbors Welcome pro-housing amendments and oppose the arbitrary design requirements suggested by affluent neighborhoods - the same neighborhoods that should be encouraging more affordable and more abundant homes according to the City's Anti-Displacement Action Plan. I also oppose any amendments that would allow the Design Commission to add delay and uncertainty to the approval of new buildings with housing or to shrink those buildings below what's allowed in code.

Testimony is presented without formatting.