



HAWTHORNE BOULEVARD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

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HBBA 2019-20

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In 2016, the Hawthorne Boulevard Business Association adopted the 2016 version of the Division Main Street Design Guidelines for application to Hawthorne. In May of 2018, we unanimously adopted the revised version of these guidelines.

Our goal was to create an effective framework to support the main street character and identity we wish to retain in Southeast Portland as our city grows. We need to both build for the future while respecting our rich heritage of design.

We are concerned that the current process for developing DOZA standards has not resulted in a document that acknowledges and supports the special character of our streetcar-era mainstreets.

The HBBA Vision is to conserve the uniqueness of our past and embrace the possibilities of the future. We count on the City to support the HBBA in achieving it. The HBBA supports the vitality of economic opportunity for Hawthorne businesses. The character of our street is a key piece of why our businesses are successful.

Main Street Standards & Guidelines are a Priority Now

We encourage the City of Portland to **use the 2018 Division/Hawthorne Main Street Design Guidelines in the new city updated BPS design standards and guidelines** (the DOZA Tools in development) either as Southeast Main St. Design Guidelines or Eastside Main St. design guidelines more broadly. At a minimum, we would like these to be used as a basis for a Hawthorne Plan District with Main Street Standards.

BPS staff did excellent foundational research to create the Low-rise Commercial Storefront Analysis, more aptly referred to as the "Vintage Building Study." We would support using this as a starting point for these mainstreet standards. We also encourage that you draw from the extensive work of the Division Main Street Design Guidelines.

This BPS study identified streetcar era corridors as having a similar pattern and character. Their proposal intended to "strike a balance between accommodating the growth intended for centers and corridors, while strategically applying Zoning Code tools to older, core areas of main streets." To strike such a balance we also suggest the following:

- **Use the Character and Context work done by PDX Main Streets as the local context reference for evaluating new Infill.** Since adoption of the Design

HBBA Mission
HBBA promotes,
supports &
celebrates the
prosperity and
livability of our
District of SE
Hawthorne from
12th to 55th.

HBBA Vision
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the uniqueness of
our past and
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possibilities of
the future

Guidelines, HBBA has worked closely with the PDX Main Streets Design Initiative over a year-long process to host large community visioning workshops, community design and development walking tours, conduct surveys, engage the business community, and document our special character buildings. With the support of a local architect with extensive expertise in historic buildings, we have identified (and vetted) with the community a list of 50 special buildings on Hawthorne that have important character we wish to draw from. This list was presented for review at multiple community-wide forums, business association meetings, and events over the past year. This list has been adopted by HBBA as important defining character and context of our street. **This list is attached** for your reference and further evidence of the character we have today which we want new buildings to relate to as we add new infill development. We do not wish to redefine our character but to strengthen it with buildings that reflect the special character of Hawthorne and to be used as a key document to help new development as a guide to draw inspiration from this foundational design.

- **Add a DAR and BDS/BPS protocol to alert applicants to the Hawthorne/Division Guidelines** (and other community design guidelines such as Boise, and Sunnyside) at the onset of pre-permitting and permitting process through standard written and verbal communications similar to what would be expected with other adopted guidelines.
- **Form an East Side Design Commission or a Main Streets Design Commission** to reduce the burden on the citywide Design Commission and help better evaluate Portland's "other half", raise design quality in new infill, alleviate a majority of commonly experienced design conflicts, reduce impacts to neighborhoods, and create a smoother pathway for growth and infill. (Support DOZA Process Recommendation 8)
- **Support SMILE'S package of recommendations for streetcar-era main streets** standards in the optional points categories
- **Add a Hawthorne Plan District** with a reference to the adopted Main Street Guidelines and a list of priority Main Street Standards
- **Explore a Conservation District for Hawthorne** (I'd suggest omitting reference to CD's in this context.)
- **Encourage (or allow) the use of upper level setbacks at the front street face** especially along narrower corridors such as Division on narrow streetcar-era corridor buildings above three stories and, or when bonus height/FAR is being granted. This is a common design tool used by many cities to be responsive to the surrounding historic form of the district while also maintaining allowed building heights and high density with sensitivity.
- **Reduce the height thresholds for Design Commission Review to 40 feet for Hawthorne and other Main Streets of similar streetcar-era character.** This would better align the level of impact to these iconic and character-filled special places in our city (which have not received historic or conservation designations to date) to give the expert design review appropriate to the importance and civic value of these special districts. The intensity of impact to neighborhoods, districts, and property values varies greatly depending on HOW infill is designed. We understand that we have a housing crisis which the city is working to address and is encouraging development of inner

areas where there is good access to transit and services. However, as DOZA is currently proposed, most of our undesignated historic districts on the east side are at risk of being fragmented or lost. Most districts will not have development reviewed by the design commission because there is a perception that the impact of buildings under 55 (or 65') is not considered "significant". The graphic by Bill Tripp, a consultant on the Mixed Use Zoning Project shows at a glance that there is indeed a significant impact. This is problematic as both an equity issue (as our buildings, businesses, residents and community places are treated as being of "lesser" value on the east side.) This is a critical flaw in the evaluation of what determines significant "impact". The degree of change as we add new development that is of a dramatically different scale, massing, quality and character is indeed significant and highly impactful in a different direction than our desired character and identify. See **images attached** which show as the DOZA consultant notes:

*As older neighborhoods evolve, there are many issues to balance including housing, economic vitality, sustainability, equity and livability, retention of local businesses, and preservation of historic resources and neighborhood identity. Infill is an important part of the city's growth strategy and its attempt to address climate change. However, **"The current system doesn't recognize the varied impacts of different scales of development."** Much of Portland's unique character and reputation derives from the abundance of small-scale, home-grown businesses that reflect the individual personalities of the people who own and operate them. Indeed, many Portland neighborhoods are filled with a fine-grained, exuberant mixture of shops, restaurants, food carts, galleries, pubs, and personal services. In the last decade, however, this diverse and distinctive character has been gradually replaced by new buildings with considerably less "hand-crafted" character at the street level." (DOZA Findings Report 2017)*

Further, most of our Eastside streetcar neighborhoods do not have design guidelines that help reflect local area priorities for special buildings and places. Therefore, these design guidelines are necessary and important to help give direction both for new development and to the City about priorities for Hawthorne Boulevard.

"A concern of many people is that the rate of growth overwhelms and erases the legacy of these areas as various older buildings are replaced." (City of Portland, DOZA Tools Concept Report May 2018).

Like Division, we have a shared concern that our district identity is at risk of being overwhelmed and these guidelines will keep vibrancy, support infill and retain our character. Inner E. side commercial corridors need a more creative, considered, comprehensive and context-sensitive design approach for our architecturally and culturally important legacy of street car era main streets.

We urge the city to consider the extensive research, outreach, design and policy tools that have all informed the creation of the Division Design Guidelines, for they have provided a

model set of design tools that may also be relevant resources for our other special streetcar era main streets with similar patterns and character.

- In the vacuum of context/area-specific design guidelines, these guidelines fill the void for not just Division but many similar historic main streets with a common “pattern language”.
- This unprecedented community-led effort has helped community members navigate growth and change with proactive approaches including design tools, education (planning and design terms , images and illustrations), and clarifies community design priorities which is of benefit for the DOZA work
- The guidelines create a shared language for improved collaboration between neighborhoods, business districts, community members, developers and architects/designers

This is an opportunity for the City to be responsive to community concerns in a proactive way that affirms community voices matter, rewards community initiated and professionally-led planning processes, as well as bottom-up, not just top-down approaches.

Thank you for your consideration, we hope you will help raise the bar on design equity for many communities by using these guidelines to help many main streets grappling with similar challenges of growth and change.

Respectfully,

Bill Levesque,
HBBA President for the Board of Directors

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Please respond to our administrator, Nancy Chapin,
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