

Chris Eykamp

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

May 12, 2021 RE: Input on Design Overlay Zoning Amendments Proposal (DOZA) Dear Portland City Council Members: On behalf of the Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District (HAND), I am writing to express our thoughts and concerns about the Design Overlay Zoning Amendments proposal, and offer recommendations for improvement. While we feel the DOZA proposal includes many needed improvements to our City's Design Standards and Design Guidelines, one aspect merits much greater attention. Two of Portland's important main streets pass through HAND: Hawthorne and Division. These are commercial mixed use corridors of city-wide significance, which also serve as hubs of our neighborhood, part of the urban fabric that support Portland's 20-minute neighborhoods. As with many parts of the city, the character of both of these streets is under great pressure from redevelopment. Without intentional community engagement and design controls to guide the development of these areas with care, valued historic buildings and urban forms can quickly be overshadowed or erased, taking with them an important part of what sets Portland aside from other cities. Once gone, these core community corridors cannot be replaced. We believe that with the proper frameworks in place, development and density need not be in conflict with maintaining the aspects of our mainstreets that add to livability in our increasingly crowded city. We ask that you protect these and other important community assets throughout the city by adopting the following HAND recommendations for the DOZA proposal: 1. Adopt Design Standards for Main Streets The voluntary PDX Main Streets Design Guidelines include items that could readily be translated into standards as part of a "Main Street Bundle". They were created with in-depth community involvement and participation over seven years of grassroots planning, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in donated work by dedicated leaders and professionals. The PDX Main Streets Design Guidelines have been adopted for 12 Main Streets including Division, Hawthorne, Woodstock, multiple streets in Sellwood-Moreland, and seven main streets in HAND including MLK, Grand, 11th Avenue, 12th Avenue, and Powell Boulevard. HAND requests that you support adoption of the "DOZA Dozen" recommended main street pattern area standards. Many of these patterns contribute to greater affordability because they are simple and cost efficient to build. The DOZA Dozen will be submitted as independent testimony by PDX Main Streets. 2. Thresholds for Design Review on Main Street should have parity with Central City at 45 feet. HAND recommends the threshold for design review on Main Street development should be 45 ft, as is the case for development in the Central City. There is no reason why the standards should be more permissive outside of downtown where streets are often narrower and the impact of a 55 ft building is more

significant. 3. Require BDS Application Submittals to include Context Criteria. To ensure communities and agencies have the ability to understand and evaluate the proposed building and site conditions and impacts, HAND asks that applications include “context criteria” showing the proposed building along with its immediate surroundings. 4. Complete the Vintage Main Street Study and Demolition Delay Review for buildings in the areas of the Vintage Main Street Study as well as buildings identified as architecturally and culturally important through neighborhood inventories until the Historic Resources Inventory can be updated and demolition review can be appropriately applied. The Vintage Main Street Study, also known as the Low-Rise Commercial Storefront Analysis, while incomplete, did begin to identify areas where the scale and characteristics of older main street eras are present as well as blocks where Streetcar Era storefront buildings are predominant. This was in response to community interest in preserving the character of these areas, which are often the historic commercial and cultural cores of the neighborhood. Strategic application of Main Street Standards and Guidelines could still allow for ample capacity for growth in the majority of mixed use areas while promoting adaptive reuse of existing structures. In addition, HAND adopted a Division and Hawthorne Vintage Building Inventory (see attached). HAND recommends that demolition review be required for buildings included in neighborhood vintage building inventories such as this. 5. Direct Staff to adopt a Community-Based Planning Policy. Currently, there is no pathway for community-led planning to be recognized by the City, or even brought to the attention of BDS staff so it could be shared with developers seeking assistance. Communities deserve a voice to help provide balance to development pressure in shaping where people live and work. Community-led planning processes that are open and accessible, inclusive of a diverse range of stakeholders, and responsive to local goals add value to Portland’s planning process and should be supported and encouraged through policy and practice. Some recent examples of community-led processes that followed best planning practices with demonstrated widespread community support include the PDX Main Streets Design Guidelines, Albina Vision, Boise Design Guidelines, and the Sellwood-Moreland Design Guidelines. We believe that good design should be accessible to all communities in Portland, not just those with the expertise, resources, and connections to work independently with developers. Staff don’t always have the resources to create these plans on their own, so collaborating with members of the community is smart. There are many benefits to adopting the DOZA Dozen recommendations. They will: ? Help maintain affordability and sustainability by supporting simple and cost-efficient common building practices ? Support human-scale design even in larger, taller buildings, which helps maintain livability and viability of important community cores ? Strengthen community support for increasing density by demonstrating the compatibility of density and good design ? Help enhance the economic vitality of local main streets throughout the city by maintaining key touchstones of their architectural and cultural histories. We believe that every neighborhood in Portland deserves access to best design practices, and safeguards to help ensure they get it. Good design can contribute to increased affordability, and the adaptive reuse of main street structures can lower our carbon emissions significantly (see EcoNorthwest Report, attached). We also believe that residents across Portland would be more supportive of increasing density if we had more examples of “density done right”.

We all know examples of where development has not been sensitive to its context, and where communities have been damaged as a result. We believe that the DOZA Dozen recommendations are a good start to ensuring we do better in the future. Thank you, Chris Eykamp Chair, Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District

Testimony is presented without formatting.