

Sightline Institute is a regional sustainability think tank. We think cities are good for our society, our environment and our economy, and that everyone who wants to live (or remain) in a city should be able to.

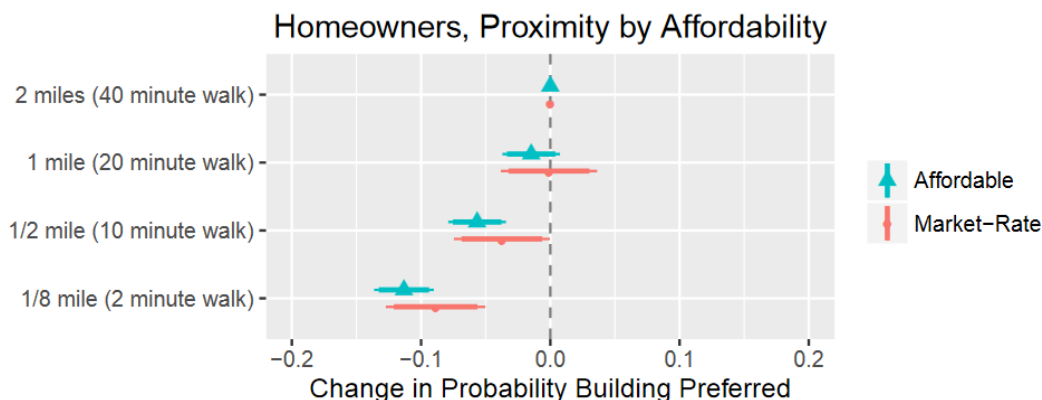
**We support the DOZA proposal.** Our position is informed by Sightline's own research into this subject and by about a dozen recent interviews and email exchanges with local affordable housing developers.

One academic finding in particular calls into question a few arguments from other testifiers.

Some argue that the costs of adding design features to a building are small. Those costs aren't nothing, but compared to many other costs that's true. Some also argue that the discretionary design review process is itself pretty fast. Often it is.

But what these points ignore is **the risk of appeal**. The 17 local affordable housing providers and other institutions that joined a [coalition letter with Portland: Neighbors Welcome](#) agree that the risk of appeal is both significant and costly.

Below is a chart from a 2017 paper from Harvard's Joint Center on Housing Studies that was based on a national survey of 3,019 people.<sup>1</sup> It tested support for new housing across various categories. As the chart shows, **the closer a proposed new building is to the average homeowner, the less likely they are to welcome its construction**. Among homeowners, this effect is even stronger for affordable projects.



<sup>1</sup> Hankinson, Michael. "When Do Renters Behave Like Homeowners? High Rent, Price Anxiety, and NIMBYism." Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2017.

This is not to claim that most homeowners or even a large share of homeowners would pursue appeals against much-needed housing if given the opportunity. But it is to suggest that statistically, some are likely to. **As we design the systems that will shape our city, we should be informed by how those systems are likely to be used**---not just now but over time.

Another point some raise is that neighborhoods should control their own destinies, by which it's meant that *some current* residents of a neighborhood should influence the appearance of future buildings in their neighborhood. It's been argued that if some people in a neighborhood are able to influence design rules, then *other* people in that same neighborhood will be less likely to oppose nearby housing.

Again, both this study of public opinion patterns and the direct experience of numerous affordable housing developers here in Portland suggests differently. The political scales of any neighborhood-specific process are likely to tilt against housing, particularly affordable housing, over the long term.

It's sometimes argued that despite a few unfortunate examples, like the 201 homes in Slabdown that have been held up since 2016, most design commission rulings are not appealed. The trouble with this observation is that until very recently, only projects in the central city and Gateway have been subject to appeal at all. In the areas where new housing is regularly proposed, mostly the Pearl District and downtown, whether a project is appealed will often come down to a crapshoot: whether or not the nearby buildings are condos.

Portland's commercial corridors outside downtown exist in a very different political context. Each is surrounded largely by single-detached homes, many of them owner-occupied.

**It doesn't take a lot of people upset about a new building to send that building into years of costly appeals.** Portland should not design a system that's widely vulnerable to such appeals.

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