

Michael Mintz

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler, City Commissioners, and Staff Members, I'm a neon sign repair specialist, electrician, and neon sign restorer, and I have been working in the neon business for the better part of 35 years, here in Oregon as well as in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many people don't realize how wonderful neon is until it disappears, at which point they really miss it. Portland's public collection of vintage neon signs a huge part of what makes our city special. Neon signifies life, connection to the past, and uniqueness of place for a city's inhabitants and visitors. These glowing, artisanal treasures are as essential to the built environment as our beautiful old buildings and open green spaces. Made primarily of hand-shaped glass tubes which are bent over an open flame by highly skilled "tube-benders," neon signs have been made with the same methods and materials for over 100 years. People love cities because their evidence of history is so apparent. Old signs are a glowing signal from the past, and make up an essential part of a vibrant, interesting city. Portland is home to a unique collection of vintage neon signs that define the city's landscape and evoke unique Northwest idiosyncrasies. Reinforcement of these images gives a great boost to city pride and enriches tourism. It would be much appreciated by myself, and the neon craft community of Portland, if you could make the following changes to the draft: - Update the photo caption on page 32 of volume 3 to include "historic or vintage neon signs, including swing signs, blade signs, rooftop signs, and other types of neon signs" so that we can broaden the terminology used to describe neon signs. Currently the caption references only "sculptural" neon, a term I would not apply to most of the currently existing neon in Portland. - Add more examples of neon signs in the Citywide Design Guidelines, again, so the the definition of neon signs is broadened in terminology as well as photo representation. Some great examples are: the Palms Motel, the Alibi Room, Chin's Kitchen, and Portland Outdoor Store signs. - Add additional standards requiring the preservation of historic neon signs in the Design Standards section of the document, as currently there is no mention of neon there. - Add a provision or some type of encouragement for the creation of new neon signs. We need to continue making new neon, so that we maintain the skills to repair old neon! I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have about the preservation of historical signage. Thank you!

Michael Mintz, Neon Gods, LLC.

Testimony is presented without formatting.