

Matt Otis

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

Transcript of my testimony to City Council on 2021-05-12 ----- Hello Mayor and Commissioners, My name is Matt Otis I am testifying in support of the DOZA. I live in the Inner Division neighborhood. I've spent years of my time volunteering as Land Use Chair and later as Chair of my neighborhood association. While there much of the foundation for PDX Main Streets--then called Division Design Guidelines--was getting started. I could spend my whole testimony explaining how their recommendations are built on a lot of dubious information, used surveys of unrepresentative groups, data mined and manipulated results to get the statistics they wanted. All while repeatedly ignored requests of progressive members of local neighborhood boards. But that would be no fun for anybody. Instead I want to tell you what I like about DOZA. One thing I saw in the presentation earlier that I really liked was... **Certainty and Flexibility** One thing I'm really proud of is the little humans in my life. And a thing I've learned is: To create healthy kids you need to create a Certain environment while also remaining Flexible to their individual needs. Take getting ready for school each morning. In our house there are a few certain rules: Put on clean underwear, bottoms, and top. Brush your hair & teeth. Put your shoes on. Oh and environmental review...will that outfit meet the current weather conditions? Beyond that, they can do what they want. Create their own style. Do whatever they'd like. And within that framework a really adorable individual character comes out. We shouldn't mandate style. What one person loves another might not. The things my generation fought for, the next might fight against. I like my century-old house...my kid loves houses that look like they were made in Minecraft. I really like rock music with great guitar riffs...my kid loves dance pop. We both like some houses. We both like music. Neither of us is 'right' or 'wrong'. So yes, focus on functional benefits & requirements, but don't over-prescribe it. A few clear guidelines can produce something that not only matches our needs but also provides space for something unique and new. Almost every architect went into school because they loved creating beautiful space. Let them flourish within a clear context! If you want to squelch a kid, subject them to criticism every step of the way. You'll create a vanilla shell of a person. Give a kid constructs, and some freedom and you can get what you want in ways beyond what you ever dreamed. To get real creativity you need to give people a context and some bounds, then let talented individuals work within that framework. The rules within DOZA create real boundaries that allow that creativity to flourish. Instead you have groups lobbying hard to design-by-committee. When you do that you end up with something...less. What is beauty? What is art? And who gets to say what's right? Sometimes it's the very presence of one thing that inspires another. [At the East Burnside bridge head] The

Fair-Haired Dumbell wouldn't contrast nearly as well without The Yard as its neighbor and backdrop. Things I ask of you: Limiting Design Advice Request meetings to 1 per project to remove months of meeting time to submit new housing projects for approval. I ask you to reject: Wealthy neighborhoods' dictating the streetscape. A thing you could do to improve DOZA: Ensuring the Design Commission is ALWAYS informed by affordability by requiring one member with experience living in, designing, or developing affordable housing. Give people clear guidelines, then let them flourish.

Testimony is presented without formatting.