

# Linda Nettekoven

**#329870 | June 10, 2021**

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

Dear Mayor and City Council Members: I wish to express my strong support for the 8 amendments to the DOZA proposal that are before you as modified. I live in the HAND neighborhood, but I am writing as an individual today. My preference would be to have Design Standards that are clear and objective, yet flexible enough to take into account site-specific as well as area characteristics —Standards that would lead without exception to well designed buildings that take into account their surroundings and enhance the urban fabric of the areas where they are constructed. This would reduce the need for Design Review and allow the Commission’s talented members to focus on addressing challenging sites and encouraging innovation in order to maximize high quality (not high cost) outcomes throughout our city’s urban landscape. I don’t think we’re quite there yet so it is important to adopt these amendments. I especially want to call your attention to Amendments 3, 5 and 8 and express my appreciation to Commissioner Mapps, Commissioner Hardesty and Mayor Wheeler and your staff for their work on these three amendments. Amendment 3 Amendment 3 from Commissioner Mapps calls for the adoption of an optional “bundle” of Main Street Standards with a value of 4 points, to be used in areas with an M (or Main Street) overlay — usually associated with Town or Neighborhood Centers. This is an excellent start. However, it would greatly simplify things if you were to extend these optional Main Street Standards to areas within the D-overlay zones as well. In trying to decipher a map of the overlay zones it is clear that the boundaries of the M and D overlays sometimes overlap; some places have both a D and an M designation. In other cases the boundaries of these overlays as drawn seem to lack a clear rationale. Simply expanding the optional Main Street bundle to areas with a D overlay would help to lessen this confusion.

Amendment 5 As you know, Amendment 5 would reduce the threshold for Design Review to 55’ for market rate buildings. This amendment provides a better chance of “getting it right” in the areas outside the Central City that are zoned to allow 75’ buildings. Thank you Commissioner Hardesty. I support this amendment. However, it will not provide design review for any of the buildings being constructed along inner Eastside commercial corridors, with their lower height allowances, small lots and narrow rights of way. In these places, new construction that lacks sensitivity to its surrounding context has been shown to have immediate and significant impacts on the look, feel and function of such districts. Better Design Standards, including the Main Street bundle, are critical for lessening negative impacts in these districts without decreasing the number of units or increasing costs.

Amendment 8 Amendment 8 proposed by Mayor Wheeler recognizes the need for Character Statements as recommended by the Planning Commission along with area-specific plans for places

with the Design (D) Overlay, i.e., places undergoing rapid development or slated to do so in the near future. This is in keeping with the critical Future Work outlined in the Staff Report on Pp 51-53 that also references the previously identified “low rise or vintage commercial areas”. The timing of this work is critical if we hope to retain at least some of the buildings and other cultural reference points that give each commercial area its special character. Character statements will usually come into play only if a developer chooses to use the Design Guidelines rather than the Design Standards. However, the existence of character statements can also be of assistance to those using the Standards. Such Statements can provide insights regarding local needs and preferences that can lead to greater long term, community support for a project. Other Requests Create an Affordable Design Standard Build on the Affordable Design Standard submitted by PDX Main Streets. This amendment builds on the work of Mike Steffens, Director of Innovation for Walsh Construction. Require Context Elevations Direct BDS to require a Context Elevation from developers as part of any project submission. Current technology makes this easy to provide. Showing how a proposed building will mesh with its surrounding environment is key to meeting the Comp Plan goals that speak to the need for sensitivity to context in infill development. Reflections on Community Engagement The current timeframe, which has provided only one week for the community to familiarize itself with these proposed amendments, is totally inadequate. It undermines and trivializes our city’s commitment to community engagement. From a broader perspective, the City is failing in its role as Convener. Design is a topic that is easily misunderstood, falsely maligned and prey to misinformation efforts. This timeframe and earlier outreach efforts have ensured that it has been primarily the “usual suspects” (such as myself) that have engaged with DOZA. Our city has missed an opportunity for broader conversations with owners of small commercial buildings, renters, BIPOC community members, small business owners and other “ordinary people” who are confused and sometimes alarmed by the growth and changes going on around them — things that seem to be happening to them rather than with them. We need to make use of tools that involve all kinds of people in sharing their needs and preferences in order to build a shared vision along with the steps to attain it. This needs to be done without forcing them to digest multiple rounds of complex, technical documents in order to comment on the Citywide plans and policies likely to affect them. I know our BPS team is highly skilled and has worked very hard on this project, but we have to find a way to do better. Thank you for considering my concerns. Sincerely, Linda Nettekoven Dear Mayor and City Council Members: I wish to express my strong support for the 8 amendments to the DOZA proposal that are before you as modified. I live in the HAND neighborhood, but I am speaking as an individual today. My preference would be to have Design Standards that are clear and objective, yet flexible enough to take into account site-specific as well as area characteristics —Standards that would lead without exception to well designed buildings that take into account their surroundings and enhance the urban fabric of the areas where they are constructed. This would reduce the need for Design Review and allow the Commission’s talented members to focus on addressing challenging sites and encouraging innovation in order to maximize high quality (not high cost) outcomes throughout our city’s urban landscape. I don’t think we’re quite there yet so it is important to adopt these amendments. I especially want to call your attention to Amendments 3, 5 and 8 and express my appreciation to

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Testimony is presented without formatting.