



Oct. 10, 2023

To: Portland Commissioners, Planning Commission, and City staff:

Portland is struggling with several unprecedented challenges:

- A housing affordability and houselessness crisis
- A displacement crisis
- A climate change crisis

Our land use, housing, and transportation policies play an important role. The 1980 downzoning of much of Inner Southeast Portland limited previously broad multifamily zoning to narrow corridors, reducing the number of potential homes and restricting access to these high-opportunity neighborhoods. Now is the time to revisit these policies and make informed and equitable decisions on land use, housing, and transportation to create an abundant and diverse housing supply, in climate-friendly walkable communities in high-resource areas.

A bold vision and concrete action are necessary to achieve these goals. With this letter, the signatories encourage the city to rezone the Inner Eastside of Portland to enable the creation of abundant housing and services in this area, which boasts access to transit, jobs, schools, and community amenities. We recommend zoning that would allow for housing that serves households at a variety of income levels. The Inner Eastside is accessible to job centers like Downtown, Lloyd, and industrial Central Eastside, as well as commercial corridors, from Hollywood to Division Street. Sustainable transportation already in place includes several frequent bus lines, a network of bike Greenways, and ped-and-bike bridges to jobs. (Recently, Willamette Week published an article in support of allowing more multifamily housing in the Inner Eastside.)

More Portlanders should have access to these amenities, which currently primarily serve a residential population that is nearly 80% white with a median household income of over \$100,000 and an average home value of nearly \$700,000. Rezoning to allow additional mixed-use and multifamily buildings in large parts of the district will serve many more residents and allow many more homes within several blocks of shops and transit.

Expanding multifamily zoning beyond specific corridors will increase access to opportunities in these close-in neighborhoods without concentrating renters on some of the City's busiest and most dangerous streets. With more area available, pressure to maximize height and density on corridors will be less, allowing more livable streets with frequent green spaces while still increasing overall density.

Allowing larger multifamily buildings will also result in more affordable units under Inclusionary Housing regulations. Increasing the amount of multifamily land over this broad area will also lower pressure on land prices and rental rates in the area.

Giving more people the option to live in this key area will help the city meet its climate and transportation goals, with more households near transit, and jobs within easier reach for cycling and walking.

Our vision is for the Inner Eastside to achieve a more equitable version of the NW Alphabet District: a dynamic, walkable neighborhood with a mix of mid-sized apartment buildings, single-family homes, and every type in-between, well-served by transit, and with commercial centers, corner stores, and shared neighborhood spaces.

Key points:

- Rezone the entire Inner Eastside, not just the busiest streets, to allow mixed-use buildings up to 6 stories and small neighborhood commercial spaces throughout residential neighborhoods.
- Area boundaries suggested are Powell at the south, Fremont at the north, SE 60th and 58th at the east, and a western boundary that is 12th Ave south of I-84, and 7th Ave north of I-84.
- We also suggest the city lobby to change state building codes to allow single-stair access buildings (point-access), which provide more livable spaces, with variable unit sizes, cross-ventilation, and lower cost.

We urge you to create room for everyone in Portland by expanding our wonderful urban villages and legalizing low-carbon, livable communities for all.

Sincerely,

Portland: Neighbors Welcome and our fellow signatories:

Bike Loud PDX
Hacienda
Home Forward
Housing Land Advocates
Housing Oregon
No More Freeways
OPAL Environmental
Justice Oregon

Oregon Environmental
Council
Oregon Smart Growth
Oregon Walks
Portlanders for Parking
Reform
Proud Ground

ROSE Community
Development
Sightline Institute
Strong Towns PDX
Sunrise Movement PDX
Verde

Inner Eastside for All: FAQ about the Proposal

The section presents details about the Inner Eastside for All (IE4A) proposal by Portland: Neighbors Welcome and the co-signing organizations, which is intended to directly address Portland's housing, climate, and displacement crises through housing abundance.

How do you want zoning to change in the Inner Eastside?

We propose that the city either create a new multi-dwelling zone or modify an existing zone for the Inner Neighborhoods. Existing zones have specific characteristics that make them imperfect candidates to be broadly applied across the Inner Eastside. We propose a mixed-use zone that allows sufficient flexibility for medium-scale development while setting reasonable use restrictions that make it appropriate for urban neighborhoods.

The goals of the Inner Neighborhood zone would be to:

- Co-locate economic / employment opportunities and community amenities with more housing
- Limit uses that are incompatible with walkable neighborhoods, especially auto-centric uses like vehicle repair and freight movement
- Allow for trade-offs between height and lot coverage to create conditions for more open space and tree cover
- Minimize inefficient use of space (eg. side and front setbacks)

A description of our ideal zone might look something like the following:

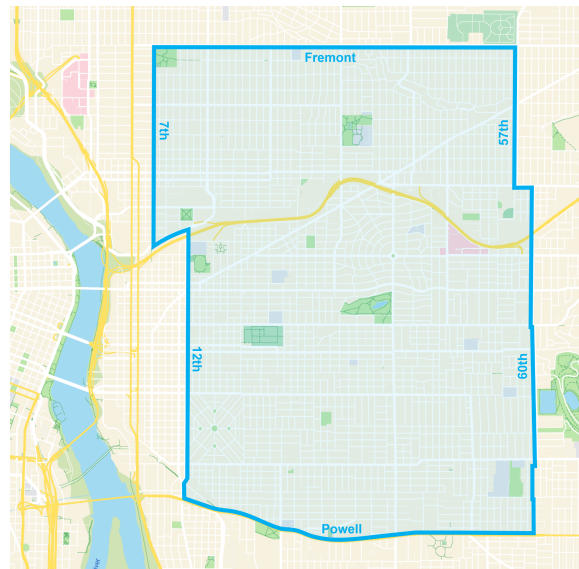
Multi-Dwelling — Inner Neighborhoods. This designation allows low-rise and medium-rise (up to 65 ft) multi-dwelling development mixed with single-dwelling housing types and small retail/commercial spaces including a full range of housing, retail, and service businesses with a local market (i.e. corner stores), at a scale that is compatible with, but somewhat larger than, single-dwelling residential. This designation is intended for areas near, in, and along centers, neighborhood corridors, and transit stations, including access to (within ½ mile of) high-capacity transit, frequent bus service, or streetcar service are available or planned. Development will generally be oriented to pedestrians. An example area would be the Alphabet District. Areas within this designation generally do not have development constraints and are in locations with urban public services, generally including complete local street networks. Maximum density is based on a floor area ratio, not on a units-per-square-foot basis.

Basics

- Maximum FAR: [3+] to 1
- Base height: 65ft
- Step down height: none
- Minimum setbacks: none

What are the proposed boundaries for the IE4A re-zone?

We propose that the Inner Eastside area for re-zone be defined as Powell Blvd at the south, Fremont at the north, SE 60th and 57th at the east, and a western boundary that is 12th Ave south of I-84, and 7th Ave north of I-84.



Why is this proposal being submitted as Housing Needs Analysis testimony?

Portland has an opportunity to address the housing scarcity that is causing our current crisis when it develops a new Housing Production Strategy (HPS) in 2024. The HPS provides a mechanism through which we can declare our intention to make changes that will result in the development of more housing, with the goal of creating a stock of homes that all Portlanders - current and future - can afford.

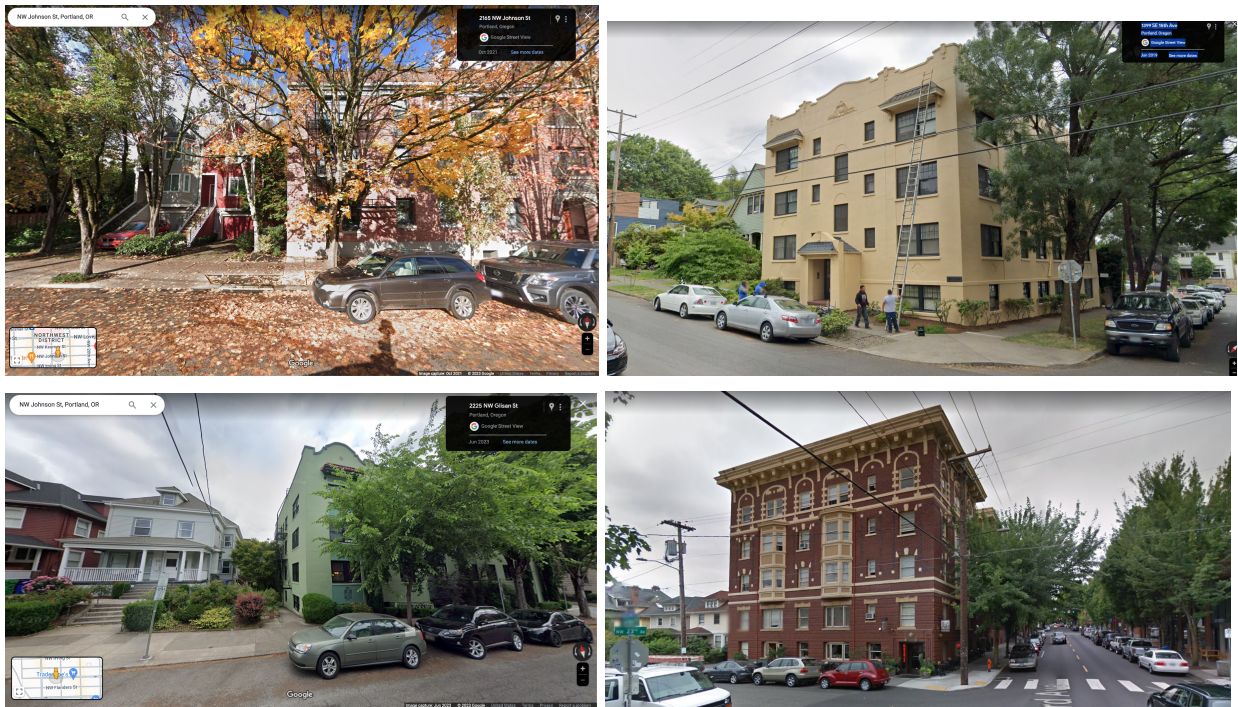
In order to take those steps in the HPS, the Housing Needs Analysis needs to say more about our needs as they exist today and the role that zoned capacity plays in how much housing is built. The current draft of the Housing Needs Analysis says that the current zoning capacity is theoretically sufficient to accommodate population growth, but as the HNA also makes clear, we have a housing shortage crisis even with that capacity today. If we don't make significant changes to zoning among other policies, we expect that the housing crisis will get worse and we will have lost our chance to make the most of this planning process.

Before the city can seriously consider a major land use action like this one, it would need to do some analysis of the likely effects. We ask the bureau to, at the very least, begin documenting the potential effects of a broad apartment legalization in these high-opportunity neighborhoods.

Is this proposal consistent with Portland’s Comprehensive Plan and historical development patterns?

Our intention with the Inner Eastside for All re-zone is to support the continued creation of “an equitable system of compact mixed-use and commercial centers across the city to increase access to community services and businesses, and create more low-carbon complete healthy connected neighborhoods,” a primary goal from the Comprehensive Plan.

The areas within the IE4A proposal boundaries fall within the Inner Ring Districts and Inner Neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan says that these areas are notable for their “broad diversity of housing types,” and growth plans are oriented towards “expanding the range of housing... opportunities” in these areas. We look to build on these goals, by bringing multi-family buildings beyond fourplexes off of larger corridors. An Inner Eastside for All would take a “[Second Street Housing](#)” approach, much like the Alphabet District in NW Portland. This is the neighborhood with the broadest diversity of housing types in the city, with mid-rise multi-family buildings often located next to single-dwelling buildings (as shown in the Google Street View images below), and it is one of our most desirable places to live. There are similar examples scattered throughout the Inner Eastside, so we believe this plan is entirely consistent with historical development patterns in Portland.



How does this proposal address the displacement crisis?

Re-zoning to allow for multi-family development would be a reversal of a 1980 decision to ban new apartment homes from much of inner southeast Portland, except along a few major streets. This helped lay the tracks for disproportionate gentrification and displacement elsewhere in Portland. Today, this restrictive zoning also leaves the older apartment buildings in the Inner

Eastside (which already sit in multi-dwelling zones) directly in the path of future predatory investment and displacement.

How will this re-zone help to create space for larger families if single-dwelling houses are replaced with multi-dwelling buildings?

This re-zone will make it possible to house more people within Portland, and our zoning suggestions are intended to create more flexibility in the types of buildings that can be built, so that every housing need can be accommodated within Portland.

However, Oregon's current building code requires that all multi-family buildings more than three stories tall have two stairwells. This rule was created with good intentions to raise fire safety standards, but it has not been updated since sprinklers were made mandatory, and it places constraints on building design that make it difficult to create family-sized apartments and condos. Over the summer, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 3395, which prompts the state Building Codes Division to consider an update that could allow smaller apartment buildings, no higher than six floors with no more than four units per floor, to be safely served by a single stairwell. In addition to allowing for more floor plan flexibility, this change would also make multi-family development on small lots more feasible and attractive than it is today, especially for homes with more bedrooms. Essentially, it creates a path for family-size homes to become more land-efficient.