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Memorandum

Date: February 1, 2024

From: Jeff Joslin

To: Portland Design Commission

RE: Proposal for Darcelle XV Plaza

Commissioners:

I write as one with a long record in related urban design manners, including Portland specifically. For over a decade until 2007, as a Land Use Supervisor, I was lead staff to this Design Commission and the Landmarks Commission. More recently I oversaw, for another decade, comparable staff and initiatives as Director of Neighborhood Planning in San Francisco.

I share with other testifiers a deep appreciation for the history and legacy of Portland's urban open spaces. From the original Park Blocks to the Halprin Sequence to Pioneer Courthouse Square to the River District North Park Blocks to Director Park; Portland has maintained and advanced a commitment to thoughtful, community-driven, well-conceived extensions of that history and legacy. The attraction and successes of Portland in better eras have been enhanced, - if not fueled - by these spaces and their contribution to civic life. Such contributions include the value to citizens and visitors who enjoy these enhancements, as well as the valuations for those fortunate enough to own adjacent or nearby properties.

In the modern past, those who most directly benefited joined and contributed directly to the establishment, long-term funding, and maintenance of such spaces. Such contributions were secondarily personally advantageous, and primarily a result of a genuine passion for Portland and its promise. Each project built on, and advanced, preceding legacies. If one were to stack Portland's downtown open spaces chronologically end-to-end, both the continuity of these traditions and the augmenting quality would be obvious.

This interim design, if added to this continuum, would not meet that test, to say the least. In fact, in a number of respects, it ignores that history and has the potential to reverse it.

The public process that resulted in an earlier iteration of the interim design was appropriately extensive, and broadly inclusive. To violate the results of that well-executed public engagement, and to surround this ostensible public park in an exclusionary shroud, would be a fundamental reversal of Portland planning traditions, a damning precedent, and darken the reputation of Portland's urban design that has - for decades if not generations - been nationally and internationally instructive and inspirational.

To do so at the will and whim of a few property owners (at most) would be a violation of public trust that is yet-more damning and reputationally destructive.

The fencing, gating, dog walking zone, and food cart elimination simply constitutes poor, lazy design and programming. Given the City's focused commitment to social equity in recent years, the question alone of who guards the entries, and who determines who and when can enter, illuminates precisely how fraught with privilege and prejudice is this gated approach. If property owners want to ensure a safe environment, then applying the well-established principles of defensible space, coupled with human security surveillance (whether at nearby owners' shared expense, or the City's) is viable and appropriate.

These are worrisome and challenging times. Furthering class divides, privatizing public open space, and armoring what hopefully will ultimately otherwise be Portland's next great outdoor room in a continuum of great outdoor rooms; is not part of the solution.

The design as it's coming before you is fundamentally antithetical to that oft-quoted cherished value at Portland's core: that "Good Citizens (and good urban design, *sic*) are the Riches of the City". That singular embedded value has manifested Portland at its best. This jaded approach is far from our best.

Commissioners: please do all in your power to convey to Portland Parks, the Parks Commissioner, the Mayor, and City Council the need to reverse this erroneous direction and its potentially destructive precedent. At stake is nothing less than heart and soul of Portland, as well as its community planning legacy.

Thank you for your time, attention, and dedication;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Joslin', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff Joslin

Cc: Tim Heron, Bureau of Development Services
Ben Neilsen, Bureau of Development Services