

10/03/14

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission Members,

For the past 24 years, I have been the owner of the property located at 1323 SE Spokane St. Portland, OR 97202, which is located in the Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood. I recently received in the mail the “commercial and mixed use zone changes” fliers and became aware that the comprehensive zoning plan will be undergoing changes in the near future. I am writing to you because I was excited to see this property under consideration for a zone change, but when I called to follow up, I was told that I had received the fliers in error. I was encouraged to write in and request an opportunity to present this property as a strong and viable candidate for a change from the existing R2.5 zoning in the Comprehensive Plan Map designation to “Mixed Use – Neighborhood,” which would align it with the closest or most comparable to the CS Storefront Commercial designation. This zoning change would bring the property into alignment with the existing Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map designations of the properties directly to the west and south of the property at 1323 SE Spokane properties. These adjacent properties have Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map designations that are the same as this request. It is the understanding of the neighborhood that the property to the west of 1323 is soon to be leveled and a proposed four-story proposed development including mixed use retail and apartments is in the initial stages of planning and implementation. By changing the 1323 zoning, you will be adding another viable mixed-use property to a unique street in the heart of the Sellwood business district. Re-purposing properties with architectural heritage in business districts is one of the stated goals of the comprehensive plan, and this property would definitely meet that criteria.

1323 SE Spokane St. was constructed in 1890 and unlike the existing commercially zoned houses on the street, local history suggests this property was first built for commercial/mixed use purposes. Rumor has it that this house was one of the original brothels serving the Sellwood area. What is known for certain is that by the turn of the century this property served the community as an 8 bedroom boarding house for the men working at the lumber mill and stayed that way until the mid-century when it became a single family home for the first time. The property originally had a second house behind the main house as well but this was torn down sometime in the mid-century.

The Sellwood-Moreland community has undergone a massive transformation since the 1998 Sellwood-Moreland Neighborhood Plan was adopted, but the values stated in that document still ring true today. Along those lines, the Historic Preservation goals were stated as follows:

Objectives:

1. Increase public awareness of neighborhood history
2. Recognize and conserve historic resources and structures
3. Respect the character of Elwood-Moreland by sensitively integrating new development with the historic elements of the community.

Sellwood-Moreland Neighborhood Plan (1998), page 29.

Since purchasing the house in 1991, I have undertaken to bring it up to date with modern features while preserving the elements that made it distinctive in its purposes since the beginning. However, over the years as the neighborhood has changed and grown, it has become evident that this property is not like many of the other single family homes in the neighborhood and there is a great opportunity available to preserve the history of the property while allowing for better use of the layout as a B&B, healing arts center or other professional office spaces. A change of use zone would allow this property to retain its heritage while serving community members much like what is found in many older homes repurposed in other neighborhoods throughout the city but distinctly missing from the Sellwood Commercial Business district.

The Sellwood-Moreland community lacks adequate office space and there are no legal bed and breakfast facilities in the neighborhood or close to it. In recent years, there has been an large surge in young families moving to this neighborhood. Many of these existing homes are not large enough to accommodate additional family members, so these guests are forced to stay in hotels in Clackamas County, downtown or in Lake Oswego. The Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood is very attractive to visitors with its large number of shops, restaurants, amenities, access to the river, hiking trails, and bike ways.

The property currently has 5 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms so it provides ample room for either office space or a bed and breakfast, and the main floor has an open floor plan that would allow it to be used as a small retail/commercial space as well. There is also an additional 500 sq. foot studio built in the back similar in size to the original historic layout of the property. The property has a driveway for off-street parking as well.

I respectfully submit this letter as part of the “public comment” process and look forward to hearing what next steps I need to take. Additionally, I would like to invite you and any other pertinent people to come visit the property for yourself so that you can better sense how it may fit into the comprehensive plan.

Thank you.

Erica Jayasuriya

Views of 1323 SE Spokane Front View and From Corner of 13th





Views Of Sellwood Business District From 1323 SE Spokane St

