

For BPS Comp Plan Hearing Nov 4, 2014.

I'm sorry I couldn't be in attendance at the Hearing today. However, I would like to provide testimony.

11 years ago my life changed significantly. I bought my first house. It was a dream come true for I am someone for whom a house means: not worrying about rent increases, having more privacy, having a "canvass" with which to be creative – both indoors and out, having a workshop to make and fix things, having a garden.....and on and on. It even meant getting in much better physical shape / becoming much healthier because that was necessary to have the energy, stamina and flexibility to do all the things I wanted to around my home. I am a senior, by the way.

There is only one reason why I was finally able to buy a house. H.O.S.T. Community Development Corp. – a non-profit affordable housing developer [no longer in existence, unfortunately] built an "affordable housing development" in St Johns.

The community fought like crazy to keep this from happening, using every possible avenue – city, courts, LUBA, etc. Some folks thought "undesirables" would come in. Funny thing is, I have paid back in community work many times over the investment of public monies that helped me to have the house. I am an advocate for the community of St Johns and have helped accomplish some striking changes – for example, routing freight trucks back onto the freight route, rather than taking a short cut through the middle of St Johns.

The point of all this is, of course, that programs that help people get into good, affordable housing, help the whole community. The housing might be single family, or attached single family or multi-family. Bottom line is that affordable, stable housing is a necessity for all – and fewer and fewer have access.

I would like to see more affordable housing in St Johns -- new or remodeled multi-family buildings on Fessenden / St Louis, especially. This corridor, if you are not familiar with it, was the one that used to have the freight trucks. Not only are they gone but PBOT won a grant to provide a total transformation to the corridor, which will make it safer and pleasanter to cross and walk along and will, in the next 10 years cause the street to come alive. But, we don't want that to happen at the expense of those who already live there. We must find a way to increase multi-family affordable housing without displacing people. One way to do this is to use currently empty lots to build on for residents living in run-down apartments on the corridor. Let the people living in the run down buildings move in and then rebuild/remodel the previously occupied buildings for new tenants.

Lastly, I want to comment on the push in some areas of the city for their neighborhoods to not be allowed to become denser; in some cases, neighborhoods asking for zoning changes for less density! This is outrageous. All parts of the city must participate in increasing density due to the UGB. For any community to think they should be exempted from this is wrong. And, if the city caves in to the demands of, often already advantaged, neighborhoods, I can tell you I will be right there fighting it.

Thanks.

Donna Cohen
8443 N Bliss St
PDX 97203