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November 4, 2014

To: Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission  
From: Sara King, AICP, Program Director -- Planning and Asset Management

Dear Commissioners,

Portland Public Schools (PPS) thanks you for your efforts, and that of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, to support modernization of its high schools, build robust partnerships, and respond to the needs of our students, families, and communities-at-large.

At present, all PPS high schools sites are residential zoned but are typically adjacent or near commercial use areas. Often predating residential build out, our high schools are considered conditional uses with limitations on how each site can provide students, families, and communities with wrap-around services and economic development opportunities.

PPS participated as policy experts during the Comprehensive Plan Update (Comp Plan Update), as technical advisors to the West Quadrant Plan, and as stakeholders in the Institutional Campus Zoning project. We thank you for including us in this effort to date and we fully support your efforts to modernize school designations in the Comp Plan Map and in possible zoning changes.

The West Quadrant Plan, and actions items, as proposed are positive and will serve to support the future redevelopment of Lincoln High School. The proposed Central Commercial Comp Plan Map Designation for Lincoln recognizes the site's location in the Central City and the Goose Hollow Subdistrict. Under the West Quadrant Plan Implementation Action RC6, the zone change for Lincoln from High Density Residential to Central Commercial will run parallel to the Comp Plan Update process. This change in zoning is timely and will help Lincoln develop unique, robust partnerships.

The proposed Institutional Campus (IC) Comp Plan Map designation can provide similar opportunities across all other district high school sites and is a very positive step towards endorsing and encouraging school sites to serve as true community hubs. However, it is the understanding of PPS that actual IC zoning change implementation for its other high school sites will not run parallel to the Comp Plan Update. We would strongly encourage the Commission and the Bureau to include such updates to foster positive development at all PPS and Portland high school sites.

As you are aware, PPS has embarked on an ambitious long-term project to fully modernize all of the high schools in the district. We have already begun with Franklin and Roosevelt High Schools and will be shortly followed by Grant High School, then Lincoln, Benson and Madison High Schools and finishing with Cleveland, Jefferson and Wilson. This is a project that will propel the district forward, however, current zoning for school sites severely limits our ability to think and act in ways that will revolutionize the way we view our high schools. That includes partnerships with institutions of higher education.