

Richmond Neighborhood Association

*c/o Southeast Uplift
3534 SE Main
Portland, OR 97214
Phone: 503/232-0010*



<http://richmondpx.org/> RNAnewsletter@gmail.com richmondna@yahoo.com

December 16, 2014

Sent via email: psc@portlandoregon.gov

Planning and Sustainability Commission
1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 7100
Portland, OR 97201

Re: Comprehensive Plan Issues

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission:

At the Richmond Neighborhood Association's (RNA) regular monthly meeting on November 10, 2014, the RNA discussed several issues relevant to the current Comprehensive Plan Update process, and voted to take a position on several of them.

Neighborhood Center Designation for Belmont-Hawthorne-Division Area

The RNA Board voted to urge the city to designate the Belmont-Hawthorne-Division area as a Neighborhood Center, not a Town Center as proposed in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Update.

The current Comprehensive Plan Policy Framework focuses on compact development and density defined by transit streets, main streets, town centers, and transit centers. A new policy direction represented in the draft Comprehensive Plan is the Healthy Connected City Strategy, which has at its core, the Complete Neighborhoods Objective: "By 2035, 80% of Portlanders live in a complete neighborhood with safe and convenient access to goods and services needed in daily life."

This new policy direction is centered on a typology of centers, places of focused activity, services and housing, having varying sizes with differing roles. These include: Major Centers (Central City, Gateway), Town Centers, Neighborhood Centers, Local Centers, and Corner Markets.

Town Centers¹ are defined as having the following characteristics:

- Serve a broad area of the city and a number of area neighborhoods and districts, with some regional function;

¹ "Town Center" and "Neighborhood Center" definitions are from the Urban Design Framework, November 7, 2013, presentation to Neighborhood Centers Policy Expert Group, p. 13; Comprehensive Plan Update: Working Draft, Section II – Urban Design Framework, p. II-4 (January 2013); and Neighborhood Centers Policy Expert Group Centers Typology Discussion, July 19, 2012.

- Substantial employment component;
- High-capacity transit/light rail;
- Room for 7,000 households;
- Mid-rise scale buildings (5-7 stories tall); and
- Play an important role in accommodating growth

Neighborhood Centers have the following characteristics:

- Smaller centers that primarily serve adjacent neighborhoods;
- Frequent bus service;
- Room for 3,500 households;
- Low-rise scale buildings (3-5 stories tall); and
- “Neighborhood Centers have a central role in helping us achieve more “complete communities” – where Portlanders have the option of meeting many of their daily needs within walking distance of home.”

Most board members and neighbors in attendance agreed that the definition of “Neighborhood Center” is a more accurate description of the Belmont-Hawthorne-Division area. This area primarily serves the adjacent neighborhoods, not a broad area of the city, it does not have a regional function; it has frequent bus service but not high-capacity transit or light rail; it has room for 3,500 households but not 7,000 households (in 2010 there were 4,000 households with a housing capacity of 6,200 households²) and there are low rise buildings 2-4 stories tall, not 5-7 story mid-rise buildings.

Accordingly, the RNA Board voted to request that the Belmont-Hawthorne-Division area be designated a Neighborhood Center, not a Town Center.

Historic Resources

The RNA Board voted to request the city to update the historic resources inventory to analyze key historic resources in Richmond and identify buildings which may warrant preservation. The existing historic resource inventory has not been updated since the mid-1990’s.

Preserving the Division Main Street Overlay

The Board voted to request that Division Main Street Overlay be preserved and expanded. There is a concern that the Mixed Use Zones Project eliminate the Main Street Overlay when new mixed use zones and standards are adopted. This Overlay is one of the few existing frameworks that provide for context-specific design standards for Division Street and other main street corridors. There is strong interest in having more design guidelines/standards and design review for Division and there is a concern amongst the RNA Board that we may be losing what could be a viable framework for augmenting more context-specific design standards for corridors like Division.

² Households figures are from US Census 2010 and ESRI Business Analyst , as listed in BPS’ July 18, 2012 Neighborhood Centers Study Areas.

Further exploration of retaining and amending this Main Street Overlay should be considered as a means of increasing more neighborhood specific design standards for the special and often neighborhood-defining character that exists along main street corridors in Portland.

Increased Neighborhood Notification

The Board voted to request that the notification requirements for new developments be strengthened to include a broader notification area, as well as earlier notification to the community.

Current notification requirements are too open-ended and often do not allow adequate time or notice to affected community members to have meaningful or timely input. A visit to the community by developers in the conceptual phases of a project proposal, as well as earlier visits to the neighborhood association prior to submittal for permits, would facilitate more effective community input, help reduce conflicts, and support opportunities for creative solutions to be identified and negotiated to meet the goals of both the neighborhood and the project applicant.

Sincerely,



Allen Field
Chair
Richmond Neighborhood Association

cc: Marty Stockton, BPS Southeast District Liaison