

HELZER Testimony: Pembina Propane Terminal Zoning Code Amendment (1.13.15)

As a graduate school professor and dissertation project chair to doctoral students on research methodologies, I teach other doctoral learners about Systems Thinking – Building Organizations That Last. You, too, are in the systems thinking business, that of planning and sustainability of cities. It may be beneficial, then, to look at some new thinking about sustainability – not only how to recover from a catastrophe, but also how to avoid catastrophe in the first place, as you consider siting the Pembina Propane Terminal BOMB in the midst of some of Portland's most valuable assets.

I was in Japan in 2011 just days after the earthquake and tsunami that brought down the Fukushima nuclear power plant. It was decided to site that plant on a known earthquake fault next to the ocean to access water for cooling nuclear material; and it was decided to design the location of the cooling generators to be in the basement, inadvertently making them susceptible to water intrusion and failure. We know what happened as a result of those decisions. There is no basic difference between what planning and sustainability commissions did in Japan, and what you're considering with Pembina in North Portland.

Located within the likely two-mile blast zone radius of the Pembina Propane Terminal BOMB, there are a number of examples of incredibly valuable public assets: billions of dollars of value in Terminals 4, 5, 6 and River Gate; 825 acres of West Hayden Island, 2000 acres of Smith and Bybee Lakes, and the 100 acres of Kelley Point Park; as well as both Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail bridges over North Portland Harbor and the Columbia River (likely loaded with oil tanker cars). They're all gone now, only the

smoking rubble of what remains is being telecast around the world, while people everywhere are asking, “What were they thinking to put a huge gas terminal on top of an earthquake zone in the middle of all these industrial and natural wildlife sites?” Is Portland the next Fukushima? None of us want that, but what’s the alternative?

Your systems thinking answers will be found in a new book, *The Resilience Dividend*, by Dr. Judith Rodin, renowned scientist and now president of The Rockefeller Foundation. Not only does she describe many huge disasters and how the smartest victims recovered most fully and quickly, but also she recommends how to avoid knowingly siting these likely disasters in the first place. Best of all, Dr. Rodin shows that cities can make planning and sustainability decisions that intentionally avoid catastrophic disasters like siting Pembina at T-6. What’s the “dividend” to us, as mentioned in the book title?

Well, siting decisions that avoid catastrophe actually attract businesses and industries that intentionally limit their known risks, and choose to build new state-of-the-art facilities in the safest cities. Portland can be among them; the choice is yours. Don’t blow this!

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