

January 26, 2015

Planning and Sustainability Commission
1900 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97201-5380

Atth: Comprehensive Plan Work Session

Dear Chairman Baugh,

I am the President of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association (SNA) and was present and very involved in the process leading to the SNA comments on the proposed comprehensive plan. I have reviewed portions of the "Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Staff Reports Available for January 27 Comprehensive Plan Work Session" (Staff Report) and would like to provide you some additional information on the SNA's submitted testimony. Please note that this correspondence is from me as a private citizen, albeit one with a rather privileged vantage point to our process. I will refer in this letter to **unapproved minutes** from our board meeting on January 8th as they will be up for approval at our February meeting. While I do not believe the cited portions will be contested, I feel the previous disclaimers are appropriate.

The Sunnyside and Richmond neighborhoods are somewhat difficult to fit into the Urban Design Framework. Every neighborhood is special, but few other places in Portland have the existing residential density, transit services, proximity to downtown, and, not one but three, vibrant commercial corridors. Taken alone, each of these corridors would be considered a Neighborhood Center serving an area of about a 1/2 mile radius from the core. Taken together, however, another picture emerges. The city has looked at this unique situation: three or four overlapping neighborhood centers (Division, Belmont, Upper and Lower Hawthorne), several major transit lines (4, 14, 15, 75), a large number of households (likely more than 8,000 in Sunnyside and Richmond alone), and a close proximity to downtown; and, initially, suggested a Town Center designation for the combined entity.

The most recent Staff Report, however, seems to have taken the wishes of the Richmond Neighborhood Association to heart and recommends a "Neighborhood Center" designation for the area.

it is noted in two places that the Richmond Neighborhood Association was opposed to the Town Center designation in SE Portland. The "town center" vs. "neighborhood center" conflict was discussed in Sunnyside as well. It was the topic of a lengthy article in our December newsletter. It was the topic of a website (<http://sunnyside.xyz>) and flyering campaign along streets adjacent to Belmont and Hawthorne. As a result of the flyering, our January 8th meeting likely had the most attendees in 5 years. Testimony given by neighbors at the meeting was definitely not focused on the "Town Center" vs. "Neighborhood Center" designation, however, it was overwhelmingly in favor of access to design review and planning which would be available to the region if it were part of a Town Center.

Additionally, while the SNA did not vote on a resolution in support of the Town Center designation, we did vote on the following **failed resolution** (from unapproved minutes) :

“THE SNA BOARD urges the city to assign to the Sunnyside Neighborhood.the Neighborhood Center designation as part of the Comprehensive Plan 2035.”

The vote on that resolution was **7 against**, 1 in favor, 1 abstaining (I abstained as chair). The SNA Land Use Chair decided against presenting a vote directly supporting the Town Center designation because we felt the totality of our resolutions indicated an implicit support and the draft proposal already had our neighborhood in the Town Center.

My understanding is that the Richmond NA vote was 9-1 in favor of a resolution similar to that which failed 7-1 at SNA. I feel the Staff Report should have reflected the fact that there is, definitely, a difference of opinions on this topic. While I can't claim that that all Sunnyside residents are in favor of a Town Center, I also know for certain that the Richmond Neighborhood is not unanimous in a desire for 3 story buildings on Hawthorne. The SNA vote against the Neighborhood designation should, in my opinion, be interpreted as an affirmation of the proposal at the time for a Town Center designation. Richmond NA certainly deserves their voice to be heard, in fact Allen Field attended an SNA meeting to promote his view, but more than one body weighed in on the topic and the testimony is in conflict.

I understand that the “Town Center” and “Neighborhood Center” designations are merely conceptual constructs. The recent emergence of an “Inner Ring” overlay of sorts seems to be a promising compromise. If “Neighborhood Centers” within the “Inner Ring” are considered Mixed Use - Urban Center **and given the same access to planning and design resources** as “Town Centers,” I believe the somewhat special case of the Inner SE “Town” Center would be appropriately addressed. I would urge that the “Inner Ring” reach SE 50th in most of these neighborhoods, rather than SE 45th or Cesar E. Chavez Blvd.

Thank you for your service and for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
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