



# BUCKMAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

c/o Southeast Uplift 3534 SE Main Portland, OR 97214 (503) 482-8252

March 12, 2015

Planning and Sustainability Commission  
1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Chair Baugh and fellow PSC Commissioners,

At the March 12<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting of the Buckman Community Association, the BCA Board voted write a letter to urge the Commission to leave in place the existing zoning of four contiguous blocks of **SE Morrison and Belmont from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue** and to reject the proposed change. This was our second recent discussion on this proposal. Both meetings have been well attended with many neighbors expressing their concerns and opposition.

Our reasons for opposing the proposal and for requesting this area be dropped from this large scale “upzoning” effort include:

The proposed creation of four solid blocks of mixed use development will result in rows of full blocks of 4-5+ story high dense apartment buildings loaded with high-rent studio apartments.

Many residential homes and units currently exist here and provide affordable housing options that are diverse in layout and more family-friendly. These would be threatened and likely demolished.

The mixed use (CS) zoning is currently being used to build exclusively large, dense, residential structures with no commercial, little to no set-backs, no amenities, and with expensive, small studio apartments.

These blocks are within three blocks of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue where block after block of ExD zoning currently exists, and where the large former section of residential Buckman was already demolished decades ago to make room for business and high-density growth.

Residential Buckman has historically endured periods where large chunks of the historic homes have been demolished. This proposal continues that trend to further destroy this neighborhood historic character and resources.

Although the Association was not informed directly of this proposal, when we discovered it, planning staff originally presented this rezoning proposal as a “non-conforming” use issue. Yet In fact within these 4 solid blocks are dozens of housing units properly zoned and conversely the rezoning itself would create dozens of non-conforming structures.

This section of SE Belmont and Morrison is almost exclusively residential and an important and essential bridge between the area around Buckman School and our children's park at Colonel Summers. Creating a four block tower of five story apartment blocks creates a wall and barrier, damages the livability of the residences that line the opposite sides of Belmont and Morrison and effectively divides the neighborhood.

In stark contrast to upzoning this stretch of residential Buckman, many residents have instead spoken for years of "decoupling" the Morrison and Belmont couplet and restoring two way traffic on Morrison to slow it down and enhance its residential feature. The proposed changes would conversely intensifies the street immensely.

The existing R1 housing options in this area is \*welcomed\* in Buckman as opportunities for other than studio rental housing options. Recently two successful R1 developments have been built in Buckman which have created larger housing units suitable for housing families with children, an ongoing and long term goal of the Association. We do not want to lose the R1 along Morrison and Belmont.

Existing robust commercial corridors lie just three blocks west from 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the river and one block east from 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Cesar Chavez. We are not deficient in this category.

There are many more reasons why we believe the zoning should remain the as it is which we welcome to present directly to the Commissioners at any time.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> and SE Stark:**

In addition to the rejection of the proposed zoning changes from SE 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, the Association also unanimously voted to reject the proposed rezoning of two properties on SE Stark at 14<sup>th</sup> to CS from R1.

These reasons include:

Again, the R1 underlying zoning is acceptable and welcomed on this street as it is on SE Morrison and Belmont. In this case, it helps to maintain these low relief but popular incubator commercial spaces.

This area has already been completely "over-activated" recently with the sweeping switch without any conditional use process of 65,000 sq. ft. Washington High School from residential to 100% private commercial space. In addition to the numerous offices and business tenants, it now also has an 1100 person venue scheduled to be open 7 nights per week all within a residential neighborhood with a extremely limited parking

The area does not need further "activation".

Concern for the loss of sunlight for neighbors behind the properties which with CS zoning could now be built up 4-5 stories.

Finally, while the Board did not have time to weigh in on the rezoning of a large swath of Buckman between SE 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> from r-5 to R2.5, we have heard from neighbors quite concerned about this move.

The R5 designation was hard fought in the years of massive demolitions and open turn of the century house burnings allowed in the area for the development of track apartments in the 1960's and 70's. Maintaining options for families, for home ownership in a neighborhood with over 80% rentals is critical to supporting the schools, the parks and stabilizing the community. While much of residential Buckman is already zoned R2.5, R1 or contains apartments built in the CS zones, the interior areas away from the main streets have been kept at R5 to help maintain and protect the housing stock. Yet, by some intense focus and scrutiny, this area is now all blocked out to be upzoned. We ask for a relook at Planning staff's move to rezone this area, for further understanding of the historical and cultural reasons for the needed R5 in the is area, and for it to be left as it is for now.

The Comprehensive Plan is a work to make our city a better place for the future. We at the BCA share that desire to work to preserve what is good and change what should change. In these aforementioned places, and with a great deal of community support and concern, we strongly request these proposals be removed.

Thank you for all the work you do, and for listening to those, who like you, care so much about this city.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Lindsay", is written across a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Susan Lindsay  
Co-Chair, Buckman Community Association