

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

RE: Concerns about the Portland 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Dear Commissioner:

We are writing to express our concern regarding current the 2035 Comprehensive Plan to change the present zoning classification of Rossi farmland and other under-utilized property from its existing R-3 status, and would urge the the City of Portland to instead restrict future construction on these properties to single-family homes (R-5 or R-7). As property owners and residents of the Argay-Parkrose neighborhood, we have become very invested in this community and its surrounding areas over the past eight years, and hope that the area continues to flourish. Subsequently, we have several qualms about introducing either business or multi-family structures into our neighborhood.

Our primary misgiving is a result of the proliferation of existing apartment complexes and industrial buildings in the area. An abundance of apartments already inhabit the space between NE Shaver St. and NE Sandy Blvd., many in various states of disarray; coupled with Garden Crest Apartments on 122nd and multi-family homes on Rose Parkway, further multi-family residences or mixed employment structures designed for industrial or office use will over-saturate the neighborhood. We are particularly apprehensive that the subsequent increase in residents will result in crowded street-parking and make neighborhood roads less safe for pedestrians and motorists alike by decreasing visibility while increasing traffic. Additionally, the lack of sidewalks in many parts of the neighborhood would mean that more street parking would force residents to walk, jog, and cycle closer to traffic. Currently, the Argay-Parkrose area is a safe and pleasant place to walk; on sunny days, people are often seen taking a stroll with their children or dogs. Additionally, the close proximity of Shaver Elementary School, Parkrose Middle School, and Parkrose High School makes pedestrian safety a serious concern. Furthermore, with easy highway access to 205 and 84, commuter traffic on 122nd has become an ever-increasing obstacle to neighborhood residents and emergency vehicles—in fact, NE 122nd has already been classified by the City of Portland as one of the top ten crash corridors (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/439832>). An influx of new high-density residences or large number of new employees will only exacerbate the problem, and would be particularly unwelcome in a neighborhood that will grow to have limited street parking.

Another concern is the number of vacant commercial buildings already in place on 122nd, approaching NE Airport Way, many of which have been unoccupied for several years. For example, the former Harry's Deli (prior to its relocation to the other side of of 122nd) has been "For Lease" for at least four years. The under-utilized Kmart complex has also contributed negatively to the aesthetics of the area. After watching the slow and unsightly decline and abandonment of the former Albertson's on NE 122nd and Halsey St. prior to its demolition and the construction of the Goodwill, we are reluctant to introduce the potential for even more empty (and, consequently, under-maintained) buildings into the neighborhood. Urban blight has not yet made a significant impact on our neighborhood, and it is definitely unacceptable.

Apartments rarely attract long-term residents, meaning that the current, established appeal of the neighborhood could rapidly change with the sudden introduction of a large number of new, impermanent residents. This would have a potentially disruptive influence on the local schools, as the frequent introduction and departure of students could cause social and academic discord. With 90.4% of Shaver Elementary School students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches, and 90% considered economically disadvantaged (according to statistics published in the Oregonian), the school seems ill-equipped to welcome an increase in (temporary) student population. The same holds true for Parkrose Middle and Parkrose High School, whose free lunch and economically disadvantaged student percentages are similarly dire. Furthermore, the self-evident under-performance of these schools as demonstrated by low test scores suggests that adding further short-term students would create an additional burden. Northeast Portland's reputation as a progressive and highly ethnically and economically integrated community is one of its most attractive features, and the balance of a wide range of income levels within the Argay-Parkrose neighborhood is unquestionably part of its appeal. The transitory nature of apartment residency, once increased with the construction of even more multi-family units, would be more likely to negatively impact the existing equilibrium than the aforementioned single-family homes that we would prefer.

It is the nature of neighborhoods to evolve over time, and vitality and liveability are essential to maintaining a healthy community. New construction is welcome here, but the nature of that construction must be in harmony with the existing area. Consequently, the existing multi-family (R-3) and proposed "light-industrial" zoning do not adequately meet the needs of the neighborhood. Therefore, it is most fitting that the City of Portland reclassifies these areas as R-5 or R-7 category for single-family homes.

Thank you for your consideration; we eagerly await the announcement that these changes have taken place.

Regards,

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