
February 10, 2015

Chair Andre Baugh
Planning and Sustainability Commission
1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 7100
Portland, Oregon 97201

Dear Chair Baugh and Commission Members:

The Portland Business Alliance (Alliance) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Draft SE Quadrant Plan. With more than 1,800 member companies, the Alliance's mission is to promote and foster an environment in the Portland region that attracts, supports and retains private-sector jobs and spurs economic vitality. The health of Portland's central city is critical to achieving our mission and, as a result, we have participated in the central city planning process over the last two years.

There is tremendous synergy between our downtown and the SE Quadrant and the central eastside industrial district, in particular. The two sides of the river support one another, and the connection between the inner east side and the inner west side will only strengthen as we grow. While each side offers different employment opportunities, they are significant and together serve as an economic hub for the Portland-metro region.

Significant change is occurring in this region of Portland, and that change may accelerate in the years ahead. For that reason, it is hard to establish a framework today that we can be certain will remain relevant for the next 20 years. We urge that the Central City 2035 policies and goals for the SE Quadrant be assessed regularly over the next two decades. Our objective should be to ensure that this important industrial sanctuary – and the jobs in it – are protected to the greatest extent possible and that businesses owners can expect regulatory stability as they consider investments. At the same time, we need to ensure that change and growth occur in rational and well-planned manner.

.At this point in the SE Quadrant planning process, we offer the following comments:

Preserve Industrial Sanctuary:

We urge that the industrial sanctuary remain focused on manufacturing and employment opportunities, and we support policies that seek to enhance and strengthen the area's role as a major employment center. In order to avoid incompatible uses and ensure that the sanctuary functions as originally intended, zoning should not allow for the development of additional housing.

Expand Employment Sub-Area:

We support the expansion of the employment sub area, as represented on maps as of January 2015, to keep pace with emerging industry and broaden middle-income employment opportunities to include light industrial, maker space, and software jobs.

Limit Retail in Industrial Sanctuary:

No more than 5,000 square feet should be dedicated to retail per building in order to preserve the effective function as an industrial sanctuary. Based on our downtown retail experience, we understand that retail is dependent on thriving mixed-use areas. We urge that retail be concentrated on commercial corridors such as Grand and Martin Luther King Boulevard and not throughout the district.

Enhance Freight Mobility:

The businesses located in the industrial sanctuary are dependent on the efficient movement of goods. Its central location is advantageous for the delivery of goods throughout the Portland-metro region with access to major arterials and highway networks. Special attention should be paid to improving freight mobility by increasing signalization at strategic intersections along SE 7th Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Grand Avenues.

Leverage Existing Parking Capacity:

There are a lot of surface parking lots in the district that may be better utilized, particularly by employees, by lifting the prohibition against shared parking among users within the district. A shared parking strategy would immediately make available 3,000 parking spaces, and we strongly urge that this ban be lifted to better serve the demands of the district.

Activate the Willamette River:

We support the proposal to add a water-dependent and water-related commercial designation to encourage waterfront access and activation similar to that of Granville Island in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Portland Spirit, for example, could have a regional loading and unloading site with such a designation that would attract visitors and promote tourism. Portland Spirit SE Caruthers landing is next to the OMSI light rail, streetcar and bus station. It is an ideal location to activate a ferry landing/terminal/moorage. The location is also ideal to create a marine commercial terminal as it has over 500 feet of existing dock and installed services to support day boat (Portland Spirit type vessels), ferries and overnight vessel operations.

We look forward to working together on these and other issues as the planning process continues in the SE Quadrant. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra McDonough". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Sandra McDonough
President & CEO

cc: City Council
Susan Anderson & Troy Doss
Bureau of Planning and Sustainability