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May 9, 2016

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission  
Mixed Use Zones Testimony  
1900 SW 4th Ave., Suite 7100  
Portland OR 97201

Honorable Commissioners:

The Sellwood Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) is submitting the following testimony regarding the Proposed Draft Report of the Mixed Use Zones project.

The Sellwood Moreland Neighborhood Association requests that the design overlay be expanded to Mixed Use Neighborhood Centers such as those in our neighborhood. Our commercial corridors are proposed to be Mixed Use - Neighborhood Centers for which the Mixed Use Zones Project does not presently apply the Design Overlay Zone. Specifically, the Design Overlay Zone expansion (Proposed Draft Map IV-2) should include the Sellwood Moreland Neighborhood Centers (Map IV-1). The design overlay zone would benefit our community and be consistent with zoning in other Mixed Use - Neighborhood Centers

The commercial corridors in Sellwood and Westmoreland are key contributors to the vitality and fabric of our neighborhood. Most buildings are older two story buildings that are being replaced with 4-story mixed use buildings at an increasing rate. The Design Overlay Zone and associated Community Design Standards have not been applied to these buildings, resulting in some unappealing buildings that foment opposition to new development, opposition to increased density, and a belief that the City and developers do not care about preserving the charm of our neighborhood. The appearance of these buildings would have been improved if the Community Design Standards had been applied. Our survey of our members revealed that they like the livability, walkability, charm, and locally-owned businesses in our neighborhood (see Neighborhood Survey Results at [sellwood.org](http://sellwood.org)). Applying the Design Overlay Zone to our commercial corridors would help our neighborhood increase density while better preserving our neighborhood charm.

As we accept light rail and increased density into our neighborhood we have the right to apply a higher design standard on our commercial corridors. This includes materials, design details and attention to the ground floor pedestrian experience. We don't believe that Design Standards will create perfect buildings, but we hope they will help in noticeable ways to maintain some of the


character of our neighborhood and help with this difficult and rapid transition to more density in our centers. We believe that with a revision, the Design Standards can be more effective when they are informed by the current times, rather than the 1980's when they were written. We believe that the requests in the conclusion in the Design Commission's May 8, 2013, State of Design report regarding the need to update the Design Standards and to expand design districts are even more important today as we think about the future of our neighborhoods and go forward with our Comprehensive Plan.

In the late 1990's both the East Portland Community Plan and the SW Community Plan were initiated. A Southeast Community Plan would have followed. In November 1996, the state of Oregon passed Ballot Measure 47 and the resulting property tax cuts led to the early suspension of these neighborhood planning programs. The city turned its focus to the Regional 2040 Growth Concept. Although Sellwood Moreland did complete a Neighborhood Plan process in 1998, the focus was totally on our residential zoning. The zoning of our commercial corridors has not been updated since the 1980 Comprehensive Plan. Through the Community Plan program three SW neighborhoods, Multnomah Village, Hillsdale and Johns Landing received a design ("d") overlay in their centers. Sellwood Westmoreland has the same Neighborhood Center designation and we ask to receive the "d" overlay in parity with these SW neighborhoods. There are surely other neighborhoods in Southeast which are in the same situation as we are and deserve a long overdue design overlay update to our neighborhood commercial center.

In summary, expanding the Design Overlay Zone to include the Sellwood Moreland (and possibly other) Mixed Use - Neighborhood Centers would help preserve the existing and desirable neighborhood character as density increases in the Centers.

This testimony was approved by the SMILE Board of Directors by a vote of 10-0 on April 20, 2016.

Sincerely,

  
Corinne Stefanick, President  
Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League