

Planning and Sustainability Commission
RE: Testimony on Mixed Use Zones Proposal
Date: May 17, 2016

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Mixed Use Zoning Proposal. It represents a great deal of very hard work on the part of staff, consultants and community volunteers and we are appreciative of the effort that has brought us to this point. In addition to working with the DDI I am a long time officer and board member of the Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District Association or HAND, but I am not speaking on behalf of HAND since our neighborhood association will not meet until this evening.

As Heather indicated, the Division Design Initiative (DDI) represents the ongoing work of another group of very dedicated volunteers and low bono consultants. Because the Mixed Use Zones proposal must look at the entire city in its recommendations, it is difficult to tailor approaches like the “vintage, low rise commercial” to the needs and preferences of particular corridors. Since Division has functioned as a defacto learning lab for mixed use development along our corridors, the DDI has tried to focus attention on how development has been playing out on the ground. Our recommendations try to address the opportunities the MUZ will create, the changes they will allow and whether familiar parts of neighborhoods are likely to disappear.

In considering the DDI recommendations please remember they have emerged after extensive community involvement efforts. Over the past two years, the Division Design Initiative has engaged more than 1,000 community members in developing a vision for the future of Division. We have been listening to the community through extensive outreach and engagement including:

- Facilitated 20+ public meetings, neighborhood design walking tours, community mapping events to identify key sites and special places, an open house, development workshop, and education forums.

- Built and installed “idea boxes” at a variety of key spots along the corridor

- Conducted community preference surveys on vision and design priorities in partnership with Portland State University and Architecture for Humanity

- Developed policy research and design recommendations including: Top Ten Policy Recommendations for the City of Portland, RNA adopted Community Notification & Engagement Policy, and the Division Street design guidelines

- Maintained a website with proposals and links to a variety of community resources.

Our goal remains to be as transparent, inclusive and innovative as we can in addressing community concerns regarding affordability, displacement, density and design that we are hearing from all sides.

Support for Good Design

Although we usually think of good design as creating beauty, which to some people seems superficial and unimportant, I want to remind you that thoughtful design does so much more. It recognizes and/or creates opportunities for greater sustainability and resilience, improved functionality, and a better use of existing, limited resources — whether it be the design of tiny houses, temporary shelter for our houseless neighbors, new affordable apartments, compatible infill slipping seamlessly into our single family neighborhoods or adaptive reuse and new growth along our commercial corridors. Design and preservation efforts should not be seen as a luxury only available to wealthy areas and individuals, but as something that underlies all the work we

do as we grow our city. Design and adaptive reuse are critical to achieving our larger goals and we plan to continue to work with our neighbors and the City to find a middle path that can achieve affordability and density as well as good design. We have draft design guidelines for Division that we hope will be of use for other streetcar era corridors and we count on the City to work with us to improve the community design standards and add new design tools to our toolkit.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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PS I am opposed to Portland Public School's effort to rezone the 1.33 acres at the former Washington High School site. The City has a first option to purchase on the acreage ...but has yet to act. This land was never intended for a huge development and only became RH (instead of R1) because another building was torn down downtown years ago and the density was transferred to that site...rather than staying downtown.

I join the SEUL Land Use Committee (of which I am a member) and Board in opposing the upzoning which would lead to development of the site. This open space is needed for the future..especially in light of the allowable increase in density expected in that area and the potential needs of the long planned, future community center..which Inner SE really needs. This is a critical opportunity to provide needed recreational uses to support a planned for increase in population.