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**Sent:** Monday, August 08, 2016 7:10 PM

**To:** Planning and Sustainability Commission <psc@portlandoregon.gov>

**Subject:** RE: 2035 Central City Plan Comments

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commissioners,

Portland, Oregon is a River City(1); not a Seaboard or Bay Front City; and it's citizenry, neighborhoods, history and method of development reflect the flow and currents present in a river.

Seaboard Cities like Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, San Francisco, Seattle and Boston then and now are cosmopolitan. These cities are capital centers controlling and spreading their financial power to vast hinterlands surrounding their CBD's. (Central Business District) We could say that a "wall Street" existed in each of these Bay front cities representing Capital accumulation and banking houses. (2) Pioneers and newcomers were predominantly drawn to these cities for the rapid accumulation of wealth and most held the dream of returning home, once they made good on their dreams.

River Cities, like Cincinnati, New Orleans, Portland or St. Louis then and now tended toward provinciality. Farmers, woodsmen and manufacturers looking to harness river power hoping to find a stable environment with cheap land. These cities attracted men and women willing to put their bodies to work rather than their capital. They focused their labor on work(earning a living) that over a long period of time would prove fruitful, build community and allow them to live off the land. These citizens did not want to return home with riches but build new lives in these river valleys and watersheds.

Historically, Politics and City Planning in River Cities radically differ from Seaboard Cities in many areas that are relevant today for us to understand as we formulate public policy. Portland, Oregon fits this model and through these antecedents below provide a clear path in the future planning of the City.

- No one European culture or nation dominated early colonization of Portland. No Dutch, like in New York or Brits in Charleston. Native American culture dominated the terrain and early settlers learned from their fishing, forest and agricultural & of course cultural traditions/ practices.
- From the start, Portland developed a very democratic street plan for urban development. No town squares or common grazing land in the CBD but a grid pattern that assessors could codify and land sales that were easier to transact.
- Portland's climate allowed early settlers and developers to enjoy a comfortable-agreeable environment. Moderate Average temperatures with little need to drain mosquito swamps or build infrastructure to withstand harsh winters.

Native American influences, democratic planning and comfortable environment are all evident in Portland's building development, design overlays and public policy decisions from Mr. Pettygrove's coin toss with Mr. Lovejoy in 1843. From that very provincial process to the deep new urbanism surrounding all of us today we see

how Portland, our River City, differs from most modern American cities. No Land Wars, Political Bosses controlling wards, or R. Moses type top-down planning in this river cities history.

"Citizens are the Riches of the City" or as Carl Abbott put it when discussing Jane Jacobs influence on Portland, "We live in a Jacobean City, not a mosaic metropolis."(3)

The Planning & Sustainability Commission is tasked with making far-reaching decisions with the 2035 Plan. Decisions that we will not be able to make again for many years. My suggestion to you in your deliberations is to stick to Portland rivers flow and influences that have shaped the man-made environment of Portland for two centuries. We have not been a Seattle, S.F. or New York and have no reason to change our historic path.

I will confine my suggestions and recommendations to two areas. Willamette River Greenway & Building Heights in the CBD.

Greenway:

\*Expand the Greenway setback from 25 feet to 75 feet at all points in the City of Portland. Where possible expand further to 100-150 feet to allow for a greater green zone along the River. Pedestrians, cyclists and everyone in between are using our Willamette River greenway system. A wider greenway allows for a division of traffic modes to achieve greater safety and comfort for all users. A wider greenway, on both sides of the river, allows for more plantings to create a Green belt system thru the heart of Portland. Please see photo of GUANGDONG greenway network in Guangdong Province in South Korea to appreciate the value of this expanded greenway approach. Pay special attention to the river bank treatments in the heart of the CBD.

\*Vegetation and plantings along the Willamette River Greenway must have stricter regulation to ensure the use of Non-Evasive species and native plantings along the greenway. In the 35 years I have been involved in the greenway planning process, many trees or plants have naturally run their course. We need rules to require that when City Parks, OPRD or Private landowners replace vegetations they are native species. This is needed to rejuvenate and cool the Willamette Rivers edges to enhance water quality in addition to provide comfort to habitat.

Building Heights in the CBD:

\*Continue Portland's tradition of tapering down height of structures along both sides of the Willamette River. It seems most larger buildings in downtown Portland are between 3rd and 6th ave. Continue to restrict higher heights as you move East towards the river. A quick look at St. Louis and Cincinnati's skylines; similar to our skyline; show the value of a stepped down height restriction. Breathing room for tourists and workers strolling during their lunch hour plus a general comfortable feeling consistent with our climate and atmosphere.

I am empathetic to the communities efforts to find reasonable solutions to both the Morrison and Hawthorne Bridgeheads. I am appreciative of the collaborative efforts between Private landowners and various political subdivisions to create unusual innovative developments on these properties. That said, I still support holding the current height limitation on these properties. The arguments City Planners have suggested to raise the height limitations to allow for higher structures at these two locations might have been wise if they were proposed 35 years ago when Meier & Frank was still our flag-ship retail business anchor in the CBD.

Today's land-development pressures in Portland are making old "difficult to develop" land much more amenable for development. The historical problems of access to these two sites near the river are melting due to new building materials and innovative design. Then we also have heard arguments that suggest taller structures on these sites will encourage aspirational projects plus direct more attention to our Willamette River. The Willamette is the jewel of the Valley-Let it be, allow citizens to see it, smell it and get close to it. There is no longer a need to draw attention to it with man-made development or embellishments.

Thanks for listening and were all appreciative of the process.

With Best Regards, Jeff

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