

TO: Planning and Sustainability Commission

FROM: Michael Ellena
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RE: Request for expanded view protection in CCSRI for Portland Japanese Garden
Central City Plan 2035/Central City Scenic Resources Inventory

**Original panoramic view from Portland Japanese Garden:
key feature of the Garden's design & purpose**



**CCSRI proposed protected view #SW06 :
Japanese Garden's design integrity and purpose is lost**



The Portland Japanese Garden requests that the view (ID# SW06) listed in the Central City Scenic Resources Inventory (CCSRI) be expanded to encompass the original panoramic view around which the entire garden was designed. The Garden also respectfully requests a variance to allow it to begin vegetation trimming and/or removal to protect this view earlier than the proposed 2018 enactment date of the CCSRPP.

Currently, the Central City Scenic Resources Protection Plan (CCSRPP) June 20, 2016 Proposed Draft lists a view of Mt. Hood (2nd photo - red box) and a small amount of downtown skyline (2nd photo - yellow box). This proposal has missed the entire point of the Japanese Garden's view which was never intended as a view of just Mt. Hood but rather was intended to be an expansive panoramic view. The Garden was sited very specifically to overlook the Rose Garden and downtown Portland and encompass a panoramic view of the Cascade foothills, Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Hood. This expansive view is a critical component of the entire design of the garden, employing one of the most important design principles of Japanese gardens - *shakkei* (borrowed scenery). The 'borrowed' view from the Garden's central point – the Pavilion building and Overlook plaza – is what makes sense of the entire orientation of the Garden and its buildings. Japanese garden experts recognize the Portland garden's view as one of the best representations of *shakkei* in the world.

Japanese garden design has evolved over more than 1,000 years to intentionally transport people from their worries and preoccupations to ineffable experiences of peace, balance, harmony and tranquility. This is achieved through a precise layering of experience that has three basic levels:

- First, the garden must create a sense of safety and protection through virtual or physical enclosure. The surrounding hillside and native forest around Portland's garden provides this function.
- Then, the garden must create an intimate experience with nature. This is done through the design which places humans in immediate proximity with trees, plants, stone and water and daily pruning and endless attention to detail that keeps every tree and plant at a human scale and proportional to the whole. Portland's garden is world-renowned both for the excellence of its design and the highest standard of maintenance of a Japanese garden outside of Japan.
- Finally, a Japanese garden restores perspective through views that connect the individual to the infinite beauty and possibilities of the world beyond the garden. The original panoramic view of the Rose Garden in the foreground, downtown Portland in the middle-ground, and the Cascades in the far-ground served this purpose.

The famous gardens of Japan each have this tripartite identity – enclosure, intimacy, and view. Sadly, with modern development, some of Japan's greatest gardens have lost their views, losing a key component of their capacity to heal and refresh the human mind, body and spirit. **Portland's garden is in danger of losing this key component unless its original views are protected.** As you can see in the second photo above, vegetation growth on the Garden's hillside and in Washington Park has obscured the once expansive view that was the critical third step in the transformative experience intended for each person who visits Portland's Japanese garden. **We seek protection of this original view.** Conflicting land use for the Japanese Garden's view is not about buildings but rather about encroaching vegetation on the Garden's

hillside and in Washington Park. The view should be framed by trees and vegetation but vegetation should be prohibited from encroaching upon the panoramic view.

Applying the EASE criteria, protecting this view has major social and economic benefits to our community. The mission of the Portland Japanese Garden is to connect people with the power and beauty of nature and the culture, art and people of Japan, through a world-class Japanese garden and cultural center. This translates into recreation for the mind, body and spirit of each of the millions of people the Garden has served over its 53-year history. In 2016, the Garden expects to serve 400,000 people with 40% coming from the local community. For those 160,000 community members, the Garden is a place where nature, beauty, tranquility and culture are seamlessly woven together. 8,300 households are members because they value these experiences in the Garden throughout the year. In addition, the community comes to the Garden for seasonal Japanese cultural festivals such as the family activities on *Kodomo-no-Hi* (Children's Day) or the mystical lantern-lit evenings as the harvest moon rises, *O-Tsukimi* (Moonviewing). Over the years, thousands of community members have treasured the view of the September moon rising dramatically over downtown – this is only possible because of the Garden's panoramic view.

Many community members participate in the varied educational programs the Garden offers – from our lecture series (600 people recently attended a free lecture on Zen Buddhism) or classes to learn Japanese pruning and stonework practices for their own gardens. Elementary school teachers use the free K-8 *Living in Harmony with Nature* curriculum which can be combined with a field trip to the Garden or adapted to any nature experience. The curriculum is designed to meet Oregon Common Curriculum Goals. Free training seminars help teachers adapt the curriculum to their specific needs. An intensive outreach program for Title I schools, *Haiku Alive*, sends a teacher into the classroom, underwrites the field trip to the Garden, provides cameras and art materials for the children to capture their experiences, publishes a book of their haiku and art, and then provides free admission for the students to return to the Garden with their families. Periodic free days and *Arts for All* discounted tickets seek to ensure that the Garden is accessible to the entire community.

Portland's Japanese Garden is internationally recognized as the finest Japanese garden outside of Japan. This is extraordinary in light of the fact that there are over 300 public Japanese gardens in North America, thousands of private Japanese gardens, and many more throughout the world. It is also known as one of the great gardens of any kind in the world, in the company of internationally renowned gardens such as Giverny and Singapore Botanic Garden. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/tours/10-great-gardens-of-the-world/>) Portlanders rate it #2 as best local attraction, taking second place behind Multnomah Falls. (<http://www.oregonlive.com/best/2016/04/multnomah-falls-is-the-peoples.html>) Attracting over 240,000 tourists this year, the Garden will generate over \$93,000,000 in economic benefits for our local community. Currently, the Garden has 43 full-time staff with full health insurance benefits and a vibrant volunteer corps of 300. Once the currently-under-construction new facilities open in 2017, it will have a staff of 60 full-time benefited positions with a minimum wage of \$15/hour. The volunteer corps is also expected to grow by 50%.

About the Portland Japanese Garden

In 1963, citizens and civic leaders formed the non-profit Portland Japanese Garden to create a world-class Japanese garden for the citizens of Portland. Long a dream of the Japanese-American community and Japan's many friends in Oregon, this garden was intended to bridge the divides that WW II had created between our two countries and within our local community due to the internment of Japanese-Americans. The newly formed organization sought a Japanese garden designer with impeccable credentials from Japan but one who also could adapt the principles of Japanese garden aesthetics to serve the needs of an American public garden and incorporate the flora of the northwest ecosystem. They found what they needed in P. Takuma Tono, Japan's leading scholar of landscape architecture and designer of Japanese gardens. Tono was a native of Portland's sister city of Sapporo, a graduate and professor at Japan's premiere landscape and agricultural university, Tokyo Nodai, and held a masters in landscape architecture from Cornell University. Tono had already fulfilled several prominent commissions in the U.S. for public Japanese gardens but the Portland Japanese Garden was to be his final and largest project, to which he devoted the last 20 years of his life.

Unlike any other Japanese garden in the world, Tono designed the Portland Japanese Garden to teach about Japan's rich culture and history through the presentation of five distinct gardens, providing an overview of 1,300 years of evolution of Japanese aesthetics, philosophy, arts, and cultural practices. Within 5.5 acres, the Portland Japanese Garden contains five gardens: *Karesansui* (Sand & Stone Garden), *Chisen kaiyu shiki teien* (Strolling Pond Garden), *Chashitsu & Roji* (Tea House and Garden), *Shizen shiki teien* (Natural Garden), and *Hira niwa* (Flat Garden). PJG uses these gardens as the beginning point of engaging diverse audiences to expand their understanding and knowledge of Japan's arts and culture. Formal and informal education programs continue the engagement process, with avenues for audiences of all ages to learn more. Emphasis has always been equally placed on the garden experience and activities which illuminate the layers of meaning inherent to the gardens and audiences' personal experiences.

In 2017, the Portland Japanese Garden will open its 21st century addition to Tono's gardens, completing a never-finished connection to Washington Park and creating new visitor and educational facilities needed since audience has grown from 30,000/year in 1967 to 400,000/year in 2016. The addition includes 4 new LEED-certified buildings designed by Japan's most famous architect today, Kengo Kuma, who chose this project as his very first public commission in North America. Kuma has been entrusted with culturally sensitive projects around the world from museums in Asia and Europe to the new Olympic stadium for Tokyo in 2020. The new buildings will be surrounded by 7 new garden areas opening up the entire 12.5 acre site to views of the surrounding forest, city below, and mountain range in the distance.