

Additional appeal re LU 19-249975 DZM

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To: Graves, Arthur <Arthur.Graves@portlandoregon.gov>

Arthur Graves: Arthur.Graves@portlandoregon.gov

Re-NOTICE for an APPEAL HEARING ON A PROPOSAL IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Case File: LU 19-249975 DZM

Dear Mr. Graves,

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed life in Portland and across the world. Projects submitted prior to the pandemic must now be reassessed against the standard of what is critical for the maintenance of health and safety. The American Plaza Towers (APT) Garage Project does not meet this standard and must therefore be postponed or cancelled.

Countries that have successfully curtailed their COVID-19 caseload promptly introduced individual or group quarantine: no contact with the outside world for at least 2 weeks. The U.S. was slow to act and recommended/required a stay-at-home practice, a method shown to be much less effective than quarantine in preventing COVID-19 spread. As a consequence, the U.S. today has one-third of global COVID-19 cases, with officially projected deaths exceeding 100,000. We practice stay-at-home at American Plaza Towers, but the proposed APT Garage project would transform our home into a construction worksite.

American Plaza has an older population of residents, some of whom have hypertension, diabetes and asthma, all of which are risk factors for severe outcomes from COVID-19. By contrast, the youthful construction workers that would execute the APT Garage Project have a low risk for severe COVID-19 and, most importantly, may be asymptomatic prior to the development of a mild illness – perhaps with a mildly elevated body temperature and mild cough - during which they might well continue to work and infect others. There is no provision in the APT Garage Project for viral or temperature testing of the proposed APT Garage Project workforce.

Emergent concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic add to pre-existing issues related to the liberation of heavy metals and asbestos fibers in the membrane and concrete, respectively, during the proposed APT Garage Project. The virus responsible for COVID-19 is transmitted through air and can hitch a ride on airborne particulates. Because American Plaza Towers would become a construction worksite, the residents would be the first to be exposed to contaminated air. In Italy, median COVID-19 infection rates in residents subject to heavy (PM10) air pollution were approximately 9-fold higher than in regions with low air pollution. The proposed Garage Project would likely place the ambient air around American Plaza Towers in the former high-risk category.

The virus causing COVID-19 enters the lungs via the nose or mouth. However, the virus also likely travels via nerve endings in the nose to the central nervous system. This explains the earliest symptoms of infection: headache and altered or loss of smell and taste. The virus then proceeds to the brainstem center that controls breathing while, throughout the body, it attacks the lining of blood vessels, with

adverse effects on the lungs, heart, kidney and liver. Thus, once airborne and inhaled from a contaminated droplet or particle, the virus can rapidly establish a widespread infection in the body with potentially devastating consequences, including death. Since the APT Garage Project was submitted – prior to the current pandemic, more than 70,000 Americans have died from COVID-19.

The existential threat of the present and probable second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic forces us to think again about the proposed APT Garage Project. Since there is no effective treatment or prevention of infection, we must set our sights on the development of an effective vaccine that can block the virus and prevent the disease. U.S. Public Health authorities project that vaccination of the U.S. population is, at a minimum 12-18 months in the future. In the interim, we cannot afford to undertake any construction or other projects unless they are required for life and health. The APT Garage project does not pass this critical test.

The APT Garage Project is not essential for life and health and must be postponed or cancelled. Were it to be activated as planned in July 2020, the present COVID-19 pandemic would not only be extant, but the project would continue through the Fall when U.S. public health experts anticipate a second and potentially more severe COVID-19 epidemic. The risk to life and health of activating the APT Garage Project in 2020 greatly exceeds the proposed benefit.

Respectfully submitted,

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