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Portland, Oregon. 97239

September 4, 2020

The Honorable Portland City Council
c/o Council Clerk
1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 140
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: Alamo Manhattan Blocks Appeal

Dear Commissioners:

I have had a long history of working to build transit and support dense transit-oriented communities within our great region. When looking for a place to plop post-retirement, of course I found central Portland and the South Waterfront aligned with my values. I felt my decision was protected by strong plans and policies.

I am joining many of my neighbors in asking you to send the Alamo Manhattan project back to the drawing board. I do not personally object to the density, or to construction of towers, but I believe the design of the tower blocks (Block 41 and 44) are not at all consistent with your adopted guidelines. Take for example guideline C1:

C1. Enhance View Opportunities. Orient windows, entrances, balconies and other building elements to surrounding points of interest and activity. Size and place new buildings to protect existing views and view corridors. Develop building façades that create visual connections to adjacent public spaces.

The staff report notes that the Design Commission initially struggled with the shape of the towers, which essentially extend the full east-west width of each block. This creates a 'curtain' across the District in the east-west direction, on the most sensitive blocks adjacent to the river. From the staff report:

"At the 8/29/19 DAR, the majority of the Commission recognized the setback of the towers to the north as providing a view corridor along River Parkway and supported a similar response on the towers of Blocks 41 and 44. At the 12/12/19 hearing, the applicant and Staff presented information that several of the towers on blocks to the north along River Parkway actually come down to the ground and are not setback. Given this information, the majority of the Commission accepted the tower locations."

This paragraph tells me the Design Commission erred by accepting that the precedent of a tower in the existing neighborhood rising up directly from River Parkway should apply south, totally ignoring context. I believe the Commission and staff learned the wrong lesson from the existing development north of blocks 41 and 44. The important precedent is not that buildings rise 23 levels directly from the street front, as some existing buildings do, but instead that buildings should be sculpted and sited in a way that meets guideline C1, in a manner that is considerate of the building's surrounding and context. The important precedent from existing

development is “consideration” in sculpting and siting a building in the context of the existing neighborhood, not whether or not the tower building is set back from the street.

The blocky ‘curtain’ effect of the proposal on block 41 and 44 are clearly not sculpted and sited to meeting Guideline C1. Compare them to the elegant and creative building shapes existing in the neighborhood which have been sited to enhance views and access to the river, properly in accord with guideline C1.

One other note. Desirable business development is hampered in our neighborhood due to incomplete streets. We are a bit of a ‘dead end’ now, so it is vitally important to this neighborhood that Bond Avenue be extended north from the tram terminus to the Tilikum crossing — connecting to the recently constructed street east of OHSU’s campus buildings (and onward to Harrison Street). This is also important for future bus transit service. Anything the City Council can do to expedite this before the local urban renewal district expires would be appreciated, particularly in light of the Alamo Manhattan proposal.

Thank you all for your consideration.

Cordially

Neil McFarlane

Neil S. McFarlane