



September 8, 2020

Mayor Ted Wheeler  
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner-Elect Dan Ryan

City of Portland  
1221 SW 4th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

RE: Support for Alamo Manhattan South Waterfront Development (Casefile #LU 20-102914 DZM GW AD),  
and in Opposition to the Appeal

Honorable Mayor Wheeler & Commissioners,

The Portland Business Alliance (the Alliance) is greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce and represents the largest, most diverse network of businesses in the region. The Alliance advocates for business at all levels of government to support commerce, community health and the region's overall prosperity. We represent more than 1,900 members, from 27 counties, 13 states and virtually every industry sector. More than 80% of our members are small businesses.

Our city is experiencing a historic multitude of crises all at once - a pandemic, depression-level unemployment, a collapse in tourism, an unsustainable rise in the cost of living, and record levels of Portlanders experiencing homelessness. A foundational issue is **Portland's ongoing housing crisis**. As we shared with you in our [2020 housing affordability report](#), the Portland region underbuilt its housing stock by approximately 23,000 units over the past decade, and we are still only building 8 units for every 10 we need.

A problem of this magnitude requires the Council to prioritize actions to incentivize and approve projects that add critically needed mixed-income units to our housing supply, align with our planning and density goals, and generate badly needed economic activity.

At this critical time we were dismayed to learn about yet another appeal by private condo owners of a high-density urban housing project – the Alamo Manhattan Blocks - which will provide approximately 1200 units including at least 120 affordable units (at 60% MFI) through the Inclusionary Housing program in the South Waterfront. This project redevelops a contaminated surface parking lot and provides significant public benefits, such as extending the greenway trail, building out a portion of the street grid, South Portal transportation improvements and bike and pedestrian connections. The Design Commission approved the project after extensive consideration at seven meetings to refine the design. We urge the Council to support this important project.

As is clear from the attached **Exhibit A**, (correspondence between the Appellants and the neighborhood), **this appeal is about protecting the private views of a few neighbors at the expense of a**

**large mixed-income housing project with significant benefits for the City.** Appellants are well aware that members of this Council will not find a plea for private view protection persuasive because it is not relevant to the approval criteria, so they urge their supporters to raise other issues scripted by the Appellant's attorneys, and to avoid discussing their actual concerns about views. Specifically,

3. **PLEASE AVOID** talking about the loss of our views. Loss of views have no merit in the design decision, that point is not a reason to reject the development. In fact, some of the City Council members may take some satisfaction in our loss (*one person in particular has been active in trying to remove the voice of neighborhood associations from any decisions affecting them, she considers the associations to be elitists*), so talking about your view could potentially do more harm than good.

Emphasis in original.

Furthermore, the South Portland Neighborhood Association (SPNA), which is the recognized neighborhood association, notified Appellants and the neighborhood in the attached **Exhibit B** that the **SPNA would not file the appeal because the Project meets the Code and design standards and there is no protection for the private views Appellants are concerned about**. SPNA concluded that without any legal error an appeal would only result in delay and did not agree to support a baseless challenge to a project.

We are dismayed at this abuse of the appeal process and urge this Council to critically examine the arguments made by Appellants and their supporters.

As we have seen time and again, senseless appeals like this one and the related delays increase the cost of housing, decrease housing supply, and reduce investment in our City. We urge the Council to swiftly reject the appeal. The Alamo Manhattan Blocks will provide 1200 units of mixed income housing, fill a significant gap in the South Waterfront area, and contribute ample public benefits. Please support the Design Commission's decision and allow this important project to go forward.

**Jon Isaacs** | Vice President, Government Affairs  
Portland Business Alliance, Greater Portland's Chamber of Commerce  
Desk: 503-552-6746 | Mobile: 503-757-5721 | [jisaacs@portlandalliance.com](mailto:jisaacs@portlandalliance.com)



Stay Healthy, Stay Safe – COVID-19 business resources

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121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1440, Portland, OR 97204

[www.portlandalliance.com](http://www.portlandalliance.com) #WeArePDXBiz

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CC: Commissioner-elect Dan Ryan

## Exhibit A

**From:** Laura Ramirez <[laura\\_b\\_ramirez@yahoo.com](mailto:laura_b_ramirez@yahoo.com)>

**Subject:** The appeal case against the Alamo Manhattan Blocks

**Date:** August 31, 2020 at 2:53:52 PM PDT

**To:** Mary Henry de Tesson <[mary@henrydetesson.com](mailto:mary@henrydetesson.com)>, Yvonne Meekcoms <[yvonne@gionetpdx.com](mailto:yvonne@gionetpdx.com)>

**Cc:** Laura Ramirez <[laura\\_b\\_ramirez@yahoo.com](mailto:laura_b_ramirez@yahoo.com)>, Martin Ramirez <[marty\\_ramirez@yahoo.com](mailto:marty_ramirez@yahoo.com)>

Hello Neighbors -

You are probably already aware of the planned development on the empty lot between us and the Spaghetti Factory known as the Alamo Manhattan Blocks. And you may have been inundated with email about the project. If you aren't interested in more information or taking any action, please disregard this.

The Alamo Manhattan development was approved by the Design Commission. They plan to add 1200 new units to that location, two high rises will be located on the blocks closest to the river, they will run most of the width (east to west) of those blocks. Many of us believe that the Design Commission ignored many relevant rules and codes that should apply to this location. Our neighbors Mary Henry de Tesson and Yvonne Meekcoms have filed an appeal regarding that decision. There was a significant cost to do so, and they did this at their own expense - personally I am grateful for their actions.

Mary and Yvonne are hoping that we can help with the appeal by providing testimony that supports the arguments being made in the case against Alamo Manhattan. Personally, knowing there was something I could do that might help, I felt compelled to provide testimony. I don't want to kick myself when later when out my window I see a high rise instead of the river, wondering if I could have made a difference.

So...if you are interested in adding your voice in support of the arguments addressed in the appeal, here is how you can help:

1. Submit testimony to the Portland City Council with the subject: LU 20-102914 DZM AD GW – Alamo Manhattan Blocks.

- Email for submission is: [cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov)

- **Deadline is Sept 10**, the date of the hearing

2. Consider using talking points relevant to the case, a document has been provided by the attorney for the appellants. I have attached that document and the appeal document for your reference.

3. **PLEASE AVOID** talking about the loss of our views. Loss of views have no merit in the design decision, that point is not a reason to reject the development. In fact, some of the City Council members may take some satisfaction in our loss (*one person in particular has been active in trying to remove the voice of neighborhood*

*associations from any decisions affecting them, she considers the associations to be elitists), so talking about your view could potentially do more harm than good.*

4. Feel free to recruit others who also want to protect the character of our community and are worried about the impact of traffic, parking and river access. If a large number of people submit testimony objecting to the development as currently designed, and if we take exception with a similar set of issues, perhaps this will have an impact on the decision rendered.

Thank you all for taking the time to read this and hopefully adding your voice to case to be made for rejecting the AM development plans.

Kind regards,

Laura Ramirez, #1413, Meriwether West

Highlighting added.

## Exhibit B

**From:** Bernstein, Scott J <[scott.j.bernstein@intel.com](mailto:scott.j.bernstein@intel.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 23, 2020 7:32:45 PM  
**To:** Renee Fellman <[renee@reneefellman.com](mailto:renee@reneefellman.com)>; Diana Harris ([harris.diana@gmail.com](mailto:harris.diana@gmail.com)) <[harris.diana@gmail.com](mailto:harris.diana@gmail.com)>  
**Cc:** Mary Henry de Tessian ([mary@henrydetessian.com](mailto:mary@henrydetessian.com)) <[mary@henrydetessian.com](mailto:mary@henrydetessian.com)>; Yvonne Meekcoms <[Yvonne@gionetpdx.com](mailto:Yvonne@gionetpdx.com)>  
**Subject:** Alamo Manhattan Project Appeal Research

Dear Residents,

Thanks you for your concern with the proposed Alamo Manhattan construction project. Everyone included has expressed interest or concern in the construction project and while we are all excited to have healthy growth of the neighborhood, many people haven't been happy with many different design decisions in the project and would prefer to have these addressed. Some of these decisions have to do with the long and tall towers that will block many views, failure to step down building heights from west to east, the lack of reasonable parking spaces for the number of units, and the inefficient use of ground retail space.

A small group has been trying to determine if an appeal is possible, and tried working with the SPNA to see if they could file a free appeal that could be driven by the residents. The approval became official last week and the deadline to appeal is July 31<sup>st</sup>. After reviewing all of our options with the group of residents and the SPNA, the SPNA decided not to support an appeal, as we have not been able to come up with a clear and defining legal violation to block the project as planned, and there is little chance of winning an appeal without being able to demonstrate a clear violation of code or law, with some of our decisions explained later. Any small violations of code would also just slightly delay the project to fix said item, without impacting the main points of disagreement with local residents.

Mary ([mary@henrydetessian.com](mailto:mary@henrydetessian.com)) and Yvonne ([Yvonne@gionetpdx.com](mailto:Yvonne@gionetpdx.com)) will still be personally filing an appeal using a land use attorney to appeal on grounds that the project should be considered as a whole, and the buildings should step down from west to east, that the building as is does not follow similar standards of narrow pencil like towers of existing buildings in the south waterfront, and the ecological impact of the towers. If you would like to contact Mary or Yvonne, and/or contribute to the costs of the appeal, you can contact them via e-mail. Some people will be contributing financially, as the cost of an appeal that's not through a neighborhood association is \$5000, and any contribution would be appreciated.

The SPNA board's experience is that there is very little chance of winning an appeal based on a subjective reason. The city council will typically defer to the design commission to make the correct subjective decisions, in order to not undermine their own staff. Most south waterfront design guidelines are subjective goals, and not actual city planning code. In order to have a high likelihood of winning an appeal required finding actual code violations. If you're aware of any code violations that we haven't yet considered, then please contact me, Renee, and Diana. The list of items considered is below:

- 738 parking spots for more than 1200 spaces – 33.510.261.F there are only maximum ratios, no minimum parking required

- Buildings are too tall – Map 510-3 project is consistent with the maximum 250' bonus height with the required additional public spaces
- Building doesn't step down from west to east – Each building is considered individually, and the buildings step down to 75' along the eastern 125' of the bank
- The building overrides 3 sides of an adjacent building (Osprey) – 33.120.225 This applied to RM3 zones, but the south waterfront is a Cx commercial zone, and this rule doesn't apply
- Blocking views – Design Guideline C1 calls for protection of existing views and view corridors. The City's scenic resources plan defined public view and view corridors, and doesn't list any in the south waterfront

Thanks,  
Neighborhood Resident  
Scott Bernstein

Highlighting added.