

2257 NW RALEIGH ST.
PORTLAND, OR 97210



503.823.4288
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November 2, 2020

To: Dee Walker, Bob Haley, PBOT; Hannah Bryant, BDS; Portland Design Commission
Re: ROW Vacation Request for EA 20-194404 DA (Welby)

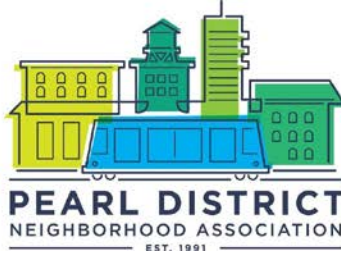
The Pearl District Neighborhood Association's Planning and Transportation Committee supports the proposed right-of-way vacation for the 900 Block of NW 14th Avenue as part of the proposed Welby project, by a vote of 14-1 with one abstention. The applicant's proposed vacation of 6.5 feet on this block will facilitate the construction of comprehensive streetscape improvements that will enhance safety for people walking and biking and help increase vitality on a block largely devoid of ground-floor activity. The vacation will also establish a greater sense of enclosure framing the street and public realm on a block that is currently 80 feet wide (in contrast to the standard River District ROW width of 60 feet). However, our support of the vacation is contingent on the proposed design being built and paid for by the applicant as part of this project.

Increasing pedestrian and bicycle safety along 14th Avenue is a major priority for the PDNA. As a gateway into the neighborhood from I-405 and an edge street with few stop-controlled intersections, 14th can often feel hostile for pedestrians crossing on foot and bicyclists riding along northbound. The current condition of the block in question is a vestige from the era prior to 2000 where this location was primarily industrial in nature and the Lovejoy viaduct touched down at 14th. The 16-foot wide right turn only lane on this block of 14th creates an excessively long crossing distance (50 feet) between curbs, which increases exposure to passing car traffic and detracts from the pedestrian experience, which is highly uncharacteristic for this eminently walkable neighborhood. The setback crossing makes pedestrians waiting at the NE corner of 14th and Kearney less visible, while the expanse of pavement encourages motorists to increase speeds and reduces safety for bicycle riders that are navigating the existing merge point.

As part of the concept, the applicant has proposed extending the curb 20 feet to the west to align with the blocks to the immediate north and south. In addition, they have proposed implementing streetscape improvements on the western frontage of their development, including a wider 14.5-foot sidewalk, landscaping, and a curb-protected bike lane with signal upgrades at NW 14th and Lovejoy to separate right turning motorists from bicycle riders continuing north on 14th. The concept would also implement curb extensions at the NE and SE corners of the 14th/Kearney intersection, consistent with the recently adopted Northwest in Motion plan, that will further reduce crossing distance and increase visibility for pedestrians.

Together, these elements would help better define the corners of the intersections at Kearney and Lovejoy and create a more intimate, pedestrian-scale environment that's conducive to slower vehicular speeds and easier street crossings. The new bicycle lane would be the highest-quality facility located anywhere in the neighborhood, eliminating the need for motorists turning right at Lovejoy to merge across the bike lane. Furthermore, these streetscape improvements combined

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with new proposed retail space at the northeast corner of the 14th/Kearney intersection will help activate the street frontage along the east side of 14th. The applicant has also committed to restoring the cobblestones on NW Kearney between 13th and 14th avenues and removing the existing concrete and asphalt patches.

While there were some concerns raised about the impact of the ROW vacation on residents of the adjacent Marshall Wells condominium, the majority of the committee endorsed the proposed concept as a significant public benefit that supports the safety and mobility needs of all people moving through this area, regardless of their transportation mode. At 73.5 feet, the resulting ROW width on this block would still be 13.5 feet wider than the typical River District block. Should the project be approved by the Design Commission, the PDNA looks forward to working with PBOT and the applicant to implement the upgrades as proposed.

Sincerely,

Reza Farhoodi
Pearl District Neighborhood Association
Planning and Transportation Committee, Co-Chair

CC: Michi Slick, Killian Pacific
Leslie Cliffe, Bora Architects