

Ralph Tahran email shared with permission

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Hi Mary,

Thank you for your email , and I will try to reply objectively.

1. Actually, SWIRL did not appeal us or challenge us strenuously, as they , as a neighborhood association realize that we are submitting a project that was anticipated , by the newly adopted Comprehensive Planning changes. We were appealed by one adjacent neighbor, that proved to be a frivolous appeal and a waste of everyone's time, that was dismissed quickly. (Another problem with the city's approval process!, Wastes months of time , needlessly) Yes, we are one of the first, so we are the most shocking, but it is what the City Planners have anticipated, and have actually welcomed our project, especially , since we are using a pretty avante garde system of prefabricated modular mass plywood units to try to do something that can achieve affordable rental rates and speed up construction on these tight knit areas.
2. Our plan is moving forward at a rapid speed, with a lot of national attention on our project, as it is pretty ground breaking, in a prefabricated housing system in 11 stories , with a lot of accomplished consultants to make this work. Several projects are on the boards now trying to replicate what we are doing, and we are consulting with each other—as we think this can lead to better things for all.
3. This project is entirely “affordable to 60% AMI”, so the only changes to rent would be if the yearly % increases above the current rate for rent and utilities, a really tricky puzzle, and why we cannot take Design Commission , and Planning Staff comments lightly, that increase costs, that jeopardize the financing of the project. The slowness of getting through the city process and permitting, is probably the biggest concern of all, the time frame can cancel the project. A shame for all.
4. We do have an e-file of the rendering, we are very proud of, we can share, but I will ask my client's permission to share it with you.

I wish you luck on your testimony tomorrow, and would be happy to share my thoughts as well on trying to make all this work to provide housing for all kinds of folks, as we do a large number of housing projects for all ranges of incomes and styles. Today's market is very tough, we cannot do anything about materials costs, or labor costs, so the only thing left is “TIMING” , and Portland is notoriously famous for being one of the most laborious, time consuming processes on the west coast! And for what reason???? I do work up and down the coast, and even in places like Denver, I can do two to three projects there in the time It takes to do one project in Portland, and I would put the quality of those projects up against any of those we go through in Portland, in design quality. Thank you for letting me offer my thoughts, I do not think I am alone in my opinions

Respectfully,
Ralph Tahran, Architect