



THE BUREAU OF **PLANNING  
& SUSTAINABILITY**

## Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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June 9, 2021

Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners  
City Hall  
1220 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Portland, Oregon 97205

The Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) appreciates the thoughtful deliberations by City Council on the Design Overlay Zone Assessment project and the attention that has gone into crafting the current package of potential amendments. The PSC conferred during our meeting on June 8, 2021, and we would like to share our thoughts on some of the amendments under consideration.

### **Amendment 2: Make up of Design Commission: *Support.***

DOZA raises the profile of natural resource management and sustainable building practices in the design guidelines that the Design Commission will use to evaluate projects. This was the basis for our recommendation that these skill sets be represented on the commission. That said, the PSC agrees with council that greater flexibility in appointments can help in meeting diversity goals. We believe that the proposed amendment would be an improvement over the status quo.

### **Amendment 4: Review of affordable housing projects: *Support.***

In our original recommendation, we supported allowing city-funded affordable housing projects to opt for a Type II process. We support this amendment, which expands eligibility to affordable housing developments, regardless of the source of funding.



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**Amendment 5. Threshold for Design Review: *Oppose.***

We stand by our recommendation to provide a standards track for buildings up to 75-ft (requiring double the points and additional ground floor standards for buildings in the 55' to 75' range), which aligns with the state's requirement to apply clear and objective procedures to the development of needed housing. This is particularly important, given that housing developments are much more likely (20 times!) to be appealed than non-housing projects.

If the objective standards are inadequate to accommodate such buildings, that's the conversation we should have. But these standards were created through a collaborative process with the PSC, Design Commission, and staff – and explicitly crafted to align with the design guidelines that are also part of DOZA. We believe in these standards, and that projects that meet them would also pass design review.

Of course, any project's proponents can opt for design review – and this may be the only practical path to a permit for building designs that can't meet the standards track. But a discretionary process should not be the only path for creating the housing Portlanders need.

**Amendment 7. Ground floor active use in Arbor Lodge: *Oppose.***

Although the PSC, like council, received substantial public input calling for active uses in the ground floors of new development in Arbor Lodge, we were reluctant to include this in our recommendation to City Council for a couple reasons:

- a. Concerns about the financial viability of retail and other active ground floor uses which, if required, could make development along this corridor less likely to happen. And if they do get built, there was concern that 'active' spaces might end up struggling with periods of vacancy; and
- b. There are quite a few mixed-use zoned corridors in Portland with similar features to the one in Arbor Lodge. Rather than spot-zone a single corridor for ground-floor active use requirements, we would recommend the city do a more holistic review of other similar corridors with an eye towards equal treatment.

We believe that DOZA will have a positive impact to the future growth of our city, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide you this additional testimony. We are confident that the package of amendments will result in quality development that supports the vision that Portlanders set forth in our Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,



Eli Spevak  
Chair

