

October 1, 2014

TO: Portland Planning & Sustainability Commission  
FROM: American Plaza Towers Condominium Association  
Harrison West Home Owners Association  
SUBJECT: West Quadrant Plan, Central City 2035

The American Plaza Towers Condominium Association and the Harrison West Home Owners Association represent over 530 condominium owners in the South Auditorium District. These associations clearly represent a large number of commercial residential properties in the South Downtown/University District described in the West Quadrant Plan, Central City 2035. Our Associations have a vital interest in the future of our neighborhood and would like to make comments on the Plan's Height Allowances, Implementation Actions RC6 & RC5, Green Loop, and Equity.

First, the Associations want to thank the Commission and Bureau staff for their time and effort in developing the West Quadrant Plan. It provides a far-reaching, visionary plan for the future of our central city. Our Associations are a proponent of redevelopment in the central city. In fact, having already witnessed successful private-public partnerships in our neighborhood over the past few years, we believe thoughtful redevelopment will bring both increased property values and significant improvements to the vitality and livability of our community. A number of concerned residents attended your hearing on September 9, 2014, and the following comments are in reaction to the report they provided to us as well as our review of the Plan.

**Height Allowances and Building Placement:** Unlike many citizens and groups who presented at your recent hearing, our Associations are not advocating very restrictive height allowance for new buildings in the central city. On the contrary, we believe a handful of slender, mid to high-rise buildings scattered in the South Downtown/University District could be a welcome addition to the community and blend in nicely with the character of the existing neighborhood. The Associations have a number of caveats in adopting this position:

- The sunlight exposure regulations that protect Portland Center Park (site of Lee Kelly sculpture) must be maintained, should be applied to all of the Halprin Open Space Sequence parks and fountains (if this is not already the case), and need to be followed for any additional public spaces created in the community.
- The public view of Mount Hood from the SW corner of Lovejoy Fountain must be preserved. If it is not already included in protected view lines, please include it now.
- The historic and architecturally distinctive high-rise residences of the Harrison Towers (Portland's tallest buildings from 1965-1969) and the American Plaza Towers (a decades-old marker of the terminus of the South Downtown District) should not be completely obstructed by new buildings. At a minimum, maintaining the current height allowances for the properties immediately west of these complexes (175 ft for Harrison, and 150 ft for American Plaza) and following the proposed plan of "stepping" building heights towards the waterfront would protect the visibility of these buildings while still allowing for additional tall structures in the District.

At the September Commission hearing, one commissioner was reported to say that height allowances need to be applied in 'a surgical manner' rather than with 'broad-stroke' planning. Our Associations believe the suggestions above support such a reasonable and rational approach.

**Implementation Action RC6:** Our Associations applaud RC6 that would develop regulatory tools to extend connectivity, tree canopy, and open spaces from the Halprin Open Space Sequence to neighboring areas of the community. One such tool to consider would be to require any new development within 1 block of the Halprin spaces to incorporate tree canopy and/or open spaces into its design, and to connect with existing tree canopy when appropriate.

**Implementation Action RC5:** The Associations also support the development of University Place (RC5) as an important element for making improvements in the neighborhood. However, it is critical to ensure that the concepts referenced in RC6 are incorporated into any new project involving this important site. University Place should be viewed as the terminus of the Halprin Open Space Sequence, and a smooth connection to and consistency with the Sequence must be key elements in any new design. Our Associations stand ready to help with any such planning projects.

**Green Loop:** Our Associations endorse the proposed Green Loop concept. Linking the Tilikum Crossing Bridge with other parts of West Portland (and the inner-Eastside) and supporting non-vehicular connections with Waterfront Park and the Halprin public spaces will make our neighborhood more livable and the whole city more accessible. We further believe that the regulatory tools mentioned in RC6 can play a critical role in ensuring there are pleasant pedestrian walkways which will support the Green Loop concept and promote foot travel.

**Equity:** The Associations agree with the Plan's emphasis on equity. All Portland residents should have not only access to our neighborhood, but also to the availability of affordable housing here. Our Associations strongly disagree with a number of presenters at the September Commission hearing that high-rise residential living destroys community and may even lead to mental illness. Indeed, many former suburban and inner-city single-family home owners have found more community and connectedness in our high rises. We want to ensure everyone has an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of this community, and consequently, the Associations are concerned that the development of new mid to high-rise residential buildings might damage the socio-economic character of the community unless provisions are made to ensure some units are available for low to mid-income individuals and families. The current demographic mix of residents in the community includes a wide range of ages and income levels. It's important that this heterogeneity be maintained.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important planning process. Our Associations are willing and ready to be a part of planning and development activities that affect the vital South Downtown/University District that we call home.

Respectfully submitted by Grant Higginson.

