

October 3, 2014

To: Planning and Sustainability Commission

From: Nick Sauvie, ROSE Community Development and East Portland Action Plan

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update

I've been working in outer southeast neighborhoods for almost 30 years. Over that time, East Portland has suffered from poor planning decisions such as:

- Packing the Burnside transit corridor with high density zoning without corresponding commercial land uses;
- Deciding to do light rail on the cheap down the I-205 freeway corridor, depriving neighborhoods like Gateway and Lents economic benefits such as those seen along Interstate and in Washington County; and
- The disastrous Outer Southeast Community Plan, which had minimal public input and directed half of the city's new population growth to East Portland without providing for infrastructure to handle that growth.

The recent Auditor's report on East Portland showed that before the Outer Southeast Community Plan, residents of East Portland rated their neighborhood's livability the same as the city as a whole. Today, East Portland livability is rated by far the lowest of any city district.

The new Comp Plan is an opportunity to start to fix this bad planning. We are pleased that the Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the public investment deficit in East Portland and recommends investing in substandard neighborhoods. We recommend that you follow the East Portland Action Plan (EPAP) recommendation to "Set a goal that East Portland attain parity with the other parts of the city in public facilities and capital spending; encourage City Bureaus to prioritize projects in East Portland" and hope that this new Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for the next 20 years. The City cannot meet its equity goals if it continues to ignore East Portland.

For the last five years the East Portland Action Plan has successfully advocated for millions of dollars in public investment for our neighborhoods. EPAP does not want these improvements to come at the cost of displacement of long-time residents, communities of color and low-income people. EPAP is greatly concerned about gentrification-fueled displacement, which has already begun. We have watched the predictable march of displacement in other Eastside neighborhoods. We hope that the city will act now, before it's too late, and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Comprehensive Plan should act more forcefully about housing affordability. Today nearly three out of four Portland renters earning \$50,000 or less pay more than they can afford for rent. We understand the rationale behind downzoning some neighborhoods, but recognize that downzoning residential is going to increase the upward price pressure on housing. The

City should be taking corresponding steps to increase the supply of both subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing.

To those of us paying attention, it is obvious that Portland is going the way of San Francisco, a city affordable only to those rich enough to buy market housing or lucky enough to get subsidized housing. In his article about SPUR's Economic Prosperity Strategy, "A plan for a more inclusive San Francisco," Richard Florida writes:

Recognizing this growing gap, the report calls for acting on the housing side of the equation as well, developing a sensible land use plan that accommodates for growth by providing housing options for all income levels. As my colleague, the urban economist Will Strange, bluntly put it: "The 'affordability' issue calls for reconsideration of [San Francisco's] aggressive regime of land use regulation. If it were cheaper to build housing, the problem would not be as severe."

The report also points to the need to create infrastructure that can support economic growth and inclusive prosperity, especially for expanding and integrating the region's transportation systems with its economic development plans. This is key. The region will not be able to address its large and growing affordability problem just by increasing density and building more housing in and around the core. It needs to invest in and expand transit, so that people can live more affordably further outside the city, and so that high-density mixed-use communities can emerge and evolve along the transit routes.

Thank you for your consideration.