

December 6, 2014

Dear Mayor Hales and Commissioners Fish, Fritz, Novick, and Saltzman:

**Re: Amendments to the North Macadam Urban Renewal Area - A recommendation to follow the original targets for a broad range of housing affordability within the North Macadam URA, to include low income housing.**

As you are aware, the original North Macadam URA Plan specified construction of housing to reflect the income mix within the Portland community as a whole. With goals of 479 units affordable for families below 60 percent MFI in the first 3,000 units built and numbers mirroring the distribution of the city as a whole after that, the district would be a neighborhood accessible to all Portlanders. Thus far, the construction has been dominated by very upper income housing, such that with over 4,000 units now completed, only 209 comply with this policy.

I have lived in Portland for 34 years, long enough to see Big Pink evolve from a thumb in the eye of the sky, to just one more high-rise on the horizon. Long enough to experience the shift of our near-in neighborhoods from an affordable “starter home” environment, to neighborhoods of aging boomers and millennials with high salaries. Long enough to appreciate the new waves of artistic and intellectual riches available to our community, in the form of great theater, dance, lecture series, music, cultural celebrations, writing and libraries. These experiences come from the influx of artists, the maturation of support from business institutions, and the wealth of immigrant and minority cultures as they change our city’s demographics.

The City of Portland needs to address issues of gentrification, and the development of rigid geographic divisions between wealthy and low-income families. We need to honor our belief in the “20-30 minute neighborhood,” with resources and work located near our homes. We need to acknowledge that artists, medical assistants, hair dressers, students, restaurant servers, homeless and disabled people are those least able to accommodate the expense and time involved in a long commute, and that URAs are a potent mechanism to enable this multi-strata development.

We made this commitment to affordable housing in 1999, when the North Macadam URA was adopted. We are falling far short of meeting these goals in the residential development thus far. I am writing to ask that the City Council address in the current amendments a re-iteration of verifiable/accountable goals of residential construction reflecting the economic diversity of the city of Portland.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

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