



BUCKMAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

c/o Southeast Uplift 3534 SE Main Portland, OR 97214 (503) 482-8252

January 26, 2015

Portland Planning Commission
1900 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Chair Baugh and fellow Planning and Sustainability Commissioners,

I write to register Association and community member's strong opposition to the proposed wholesale up-zoning of four contiguous blocks between SE Morrison and Belmont Sts, and 15th and 19th Avenues.

This area represents the key 'heart' and connection of our residential neighborhood. Many of the properties here are original, turn of the century, single family homes which currently serve home owners as well as provide valuable low income housing. Some other non-conforming commercial properties are zoned R-1, which we find an excellent, neighborhood 'enhancing' designation should the properties ever be redeveloped. We want the current zoning designations to continue and for this area of our residential neighborhood to continue knitting together the areas north and south of Belmont street. Both the north side of SE Morrison and the south side of SE Belmont currently in this area are also zoned residential.

Creating a wall of commercial blocks internally in this area will not only set the stage for large scale demolitions and tenant displacements, but for the creation of the kinds of developments that are anything but neighborhood enhancing. Expensive, high density, 4-5 stories of mostly studio and one bedroom apartments are built, enriching developers, sending low-income long-term residents packing, putting intense traffic and parking pressures on an area without off-street parking, and adding little to the neighborhood except density while erasing the options for new, real family size housing.

The Buckman neighborhood is not lacking in commercial opportunity or room for these kinds of development in the least. Far from it. In fact, large nearby areas of West Buckman, beginning at 12th Avenue and going all the way west to the Willamette River, have huge areas already zoned EXd, allowing for the types of apartment towers and large scale commercial build-up that Planning and developers now favor. These were once residential neighborhoods...now all commercial. Buckman needs to protect what existing residential, family housing and R1 designation we currently have.

Additionally the Bureau's plan to rezone a large portion of the neighborhood currently zoned R-5 to R-2.5 raises serious questions. The amount of scrutiny and intense staff time that has gone into this particular area involving the analysis of this proposed change for the blocks between 16th-20th Avenues, Stark to Morrison is simply peculiar. Why were other areas of the inner east side not subjected to this level intense study? Why only here, and why when this proposed move was initially and strongly questioned, was the effort then intensified even further and expanded?

This area's designation as R5 was a historic victory on the part of neighborhood activists decades ago who fought back against the wholesale rezoning of much of Buckman as a vast "apartment zone". Many demolitions ensued, and would have gone on were it not for the focused efforts of those earlier activists. To protect the residential core, and make up for the scores of grand structures demolished for those split level "American Family" apartment buildings we all know, the R5 designation was earned and it has helped sustain, protect and stabilize the residential portions of Buckman.

Finally, and most disconcertingly, the public was repeatedly told at the small number of hearing which actually allowed public oral comment on the proposals that written public comment on all these proposed changes would be taken well into March 2015. Yet recently I was personally informed by Planning staff that decisions were proposed to be made on these matters imminently long before the public comment period ends. How can that be?

This is particularly disturbing as we planned to host an open public forum/meeting on these proposed significant land use changes, designed with the March deadline for comment in mind...yet it appears now that your ability to hear and be informed of the large-scale discontent and concern regarding these proposals will be null and void, arriving "after the fact" in the process.

Please hear our concerns now and reject these proposed changes. At the very least, delay making any decisions until you have more facts on all of this. These proposed changes will 'hurt' the neighborhood grievously, go against all the efforts we have made for years to protect our existing housing stock, drive out affordability and are simply not needed nor wanted here. There is ample, existing, high density commercial areas of large proportion just three blocks west. Build there.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns,

Sincerely Yours,

Susan Lindsay
Co-Chair, Buckman Community Association