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February 24, 2015
Testimony for Community Alliance of Tenants
Hearing on TSP

We can only support the improvements and investments called for in the Comp Plan and in the TSP if they are accompanied by the anti-displacement measures that are presented tonight. Displacement is not only harmful to the individuals and families that are displaced -- it destroys the entire city. When tenants are wrongfully evicted, their ability to maintain steady work and livelihood falls apart. Incessantly searching for an affordable and safe home is destructive for those who cannot easily accommodate constant moving. People are struggling to maintain a lifestyle that is safe for their families. People cannot get to work, job interviews, take their kids to school, or participate in other self-improvement activities if the housing and transportation systems are not adequate. The city as a whole suffers greatly because of a lack of attention to these issues.

We need to stimulate our economy and cultural diversity, not hinder it with methods of displacement. Socio-economic division leads to higher crime rates. Separation also scrounges the ability of all cultures and creeds to appreciate the city as a whole. The beauty of Portland lies in the fact that there are various people and cultures scattered throughout the city, not isolated in particular areas.

The immigration of middle-to-high class people into Portland has lead to the increase in rent all across Washington and Multnomah Counties. Because of the urban-growth boundary, and because of a lack of rent control, people limited by economic and cultural barriers cannot sustain a life in Portland or the surrounding area. This is what displacement means to Portland: the involuntary uprooting of hard-working, loyal, and diverse peoples. This displacement makes it even harder for a large city like Portland to build sufficient, affordable, and sustainable transportation.

Landlords give eviction notices in response to tenants requests for repairs - which the tenants are entitled by law to receive. But given the cultural and economic position of the tenants, they are victimized. Tenants leave their homes because of the fear of landlord action, most of them not knowing their right to a cause of action. Holding landlords to legal requirements for notice periods or "for-cause" only bases for eviction will help accomplish the goal of decreasing displacement.

Studying data is the first step to understand the extent of displacement by housing discrimination, and it is completely within the city's ability to collect this data. We need to update data constantly to accommodate for the future. The City is obliged to take a reasonable effort to pursue fairness under the law. We need to ensure that landlords are required to report a justifiable cause for a notice of eviction; this would dissuade landlords from acting in such heinous and exaggerated ways, and would reduce the amount of displacement which results from evictions without cause or proper notice.

This city was built on the commingling of cultures; homogeny will not serve us well as we move into the future. We need to provide housing for many people whom all work and play here. We can do this by providing transportation and housing frameworks that treat everyone fairly.

The Transportation System Plan will only be long-lasting and balanced if it focuses on those who need more support: residents of Portland who want a convenient and safe way to travel.