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Sent: Sunday, May 15, 2016 12:05 AM
To: Planning and Sustainability Commission <psc@portlandoregon.gov>
Subject: PSC Mixed Use Zones testimony

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May 15, 2016

Testimony to Planning and Sustainability Commission

RE: Mixed Use Zones:

Remove the "Minimum 10' Setback on selected Civic Corridors" in 33.130.215 (B)

May 15, 2016

Portland Planning Commission

Chair Schultz and Commissioners:

As part of an effort to respond to the five Pattern Areas, the Mixed Use zones plan includes a requirements that storefront buildings be set back 10 feet behind the public sidewalk (behind the property line) on SW Barbur, SE/NE 122nd, SE Division east of I-205, and SE Stark east of I-205.

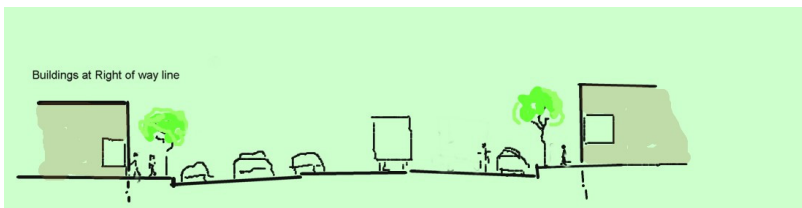
A century of planning thought has led to the conclusion that commercial buildings right at the back of the sidewalks, with Ground Floor Windows, create a more pleasant and interesting pedestrian environment. Portland's Zoning code has required this along all Transit Streets for decades.



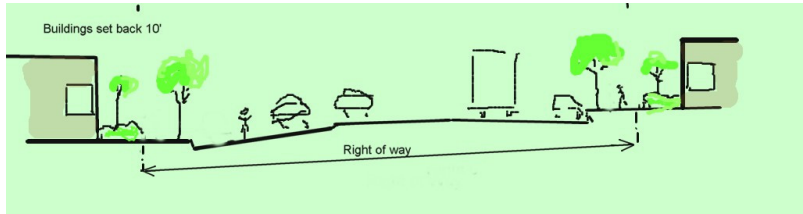
Commercial buildings set back behind landscaping, as is often the case in suburban jurisdictions, do not contribute to street life



A sufficiently wide sidewalk (Increase that standard to 15' or so) on Civic Corridor-designated streets like SE 122nd, and SW Barbur, with wide street trees near the curb, and buildings built up to the back of the sidewalk, are first steps toward a good walking environment. Having the sidewalk abut commercial building frontages and having entrances off that sidewalk is key.



Setting the buildings back only increases the visual "size" of the street.



It exacerbates the overly large distance from buildings on one side of the street to those on the other side. The narrower the street "room" is, the more it feels like a pedestrian environment. This standard seems to only reinforce the auto-orientation of these corridors. Instead of setting buildings back, we should be removing lanes, like on Division and soon on Foster Road.

This 10' setback is proposed for all Civic Corridors in the Eastern and Western Pattern Areas, which are too wide to feel comfortable already. While staff supposes they are getting a wider "sidewalk", in reality by allowing landscaping and other construction, the result is that the pedestrian must stay on the public sidewalk portion to travel anyway. Here is an example of such a required 10' sidewalk on Powell Blvd.



A better pedestrian path could be gotten if PBOT would require dedication to get an actual wider sidewalk (say, 15') instead of using a private property strip where access could and will often be blocked.

The 10' Minimum setback should be dropped for all non-residential uses, especially commercial storefronts.. The 10' setback could be required where the building or portion of the building is

residential, with the only paving necessary being for the walkway to the building entrance. There still need to be windows on the residential units facing the street.

Residential Only:



The 10' minimum front setback on Civic Corridors in Eastern and Western pattern areas in 33.130.215 (B) should be removed. Such a minimum setback could be required for buildings that have residential uses on their ground floor facing the corridor, but should never be for Commercial or Office uses.

Thank you.

Doug Klotz