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To: Planning and Sustainability Commission <psc@portlandoregon.gov>
Cc: Tracy J. Prince, Ph.D. <tprince@pdx.edu>
Subject: CC2035

Gentlemen/Mesdames:

I moved to Portland from a neighborhood in Boston that is known as Back Bay. Back Bay comprises eight by four blocks of uninterrupted Victorian brownstone residences. It is "considered one of the best preserved examples of 19-century urban design in the United States," to quote from Wikipedia.

In the '60s and '70s, Boston fell on hard times economically, and there was intense pressure from developers to replace with new construction the decrepit brownstones in Back Bay, because of the employment that would be created for the construction industry. In one case, the city succumbed to this pressure, resulting in a proverbial "sore thumb" that rises incongruously above the sea of low-rise brick buildings surrounding it. Otherwise, by some miracle, the City of Boston retained the limit on the height of buildings that had been in place ever since Back Bay was first developed. Today, Boston would be dramatically diminished if Back Bay had been compromised by demolition and new construction. It is one of Boston's main tourist attractions and a sought-after residential neighborhood. The maintenance of its old buildings keeps legions of Boston's tradesmen permanently employed.

Portland can learn from the past history of Back Bay. As everyone recognizes, it is largely Portland's natural landscape that brings people here as tourists or as new residents. Portland's perceived desirability as a place in which to live and work is directly connected with its suitability as a destination for investment dollars. Will the city fathers choose to preserve Portland's iconic views and natural splendor, or will they compromise into oblivion, one misguided construction permit at a time, the qualities that set Portland apart from the mass of bland American cities? The choice is really as simple as that, and the right choice is clear for all to see in the history of Boston's magnificent Back Bay. "Death by a thousand cuts" must not be allowed to describe the future development of Portland.

Yours sincerely,

Cliff Weber
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