

Testimony to Portland Planning & Sustainability Commission July 26, 2016

Hello my name is Bruce Stephenson. I serve on the Pearl District Planning Committee (PDPC) and I am speaking on behalf of Carolyn Ciolkoz, executive director of the Pearl District Business Association.

I would like to direct your attention to **Chapter 1 Comprehensive Plan, Policy 1.19**, which states:

Use area-specific plans to provide additional detail or refinements applicable at a smaller geographic scale, such as for centers and corridors, within the policy framework provided by the overall Comprehensive Plan.

A policy or point of clarification should be added to delineate that the Comprehensive Plan will guide decisions of the Portland Development Commission

I say this because the PDC plan for Centennial Mills, and I quote the PDPC minutes from March 1, 2016: *removed the original requirements for open space and public activation*. Myself, and other members of the committee were flummoxed by this decision because it contradicts the *North Pearl District Plan*, which the Comprehensive Plans identifies on page 13 as an *Area-Specific Plans Adopted by Ordinance*

North Pearl District Plan

Page 31, 50: *The Centennial Mills redevelopment project (underway by PDC) will result in the creation of a vibrant mixed-use development that promises to be one of the great attractors in the Pearl District and the City as a whole.*

Key to this endeavor is providing, as stated on page 31: *Physical and visual access to and along the waterfront should be accommodated via a network of access corridors, plazas, and urban open space features*

The provision of “*additional waterfront parks and open space*” is also called for on p. 2.

AGAIN, Given the discrepancy between stated policy and the PDC Plan for Centennial Mills there should be clarifying language to ensure that *Area-Specific Plans Adopted by Ordinance* are followed.

Finally, it might be wise to recall at some point in the Comprehensive Plan to quote the *Olmsted Brothers 1903 Park Plan*.

All agree that parks not only add to the beauty of a city and to the pleasure of living in it,” John Charles Olmsted wrote, but they are exceedingly important factors in developing the healthfulness, morality, intelligence, and business prosperity of all its residents.

A second letter follows to be placed in the record:

I’m writing to encourage you to continue to recognize the valuable role public space

plays in the success of the city's central core, particularly along the remaining waterfront. Public space, both as parks and plazas, brings vitality to urban neighborhoods, boosting their economic success, and we risk missing out on key opportunities to create world class open spaces even as our central city is poised to grow exponentially.

Centennial Mills has long been envisioned as a community focal point for the Pearl District. "Centennial Mills," the Portland Development Commission (PDC) stated in 2006, "provides the prospect for building upon Portland's waterfront / greenway open space system and for complementing the strong series of signature parks and open spaces that define the Central City." Yet the PDC's current plan eviscerates this potential. A narrow path provides access to a mandated 50-foot greenway bounding the riverfront, but there is no attendant public space—a direct negation of the Pearl District Development Plan policy to develop the riverfront "as an engaging public space" with "open space and other public uses."

Currently, the lack of pedestrian traffic on NW 11th Avenue north of Overton has made developers resistant to building retail, which runs counter to the Pearl District Development Plan policy to "target retail uses along specific corridors, such as NW 11 Avenue." Extending the park experience that begins at Jamison Square to the Willamette River would mitigate this problem. Pedestrian access is the key. Plans already exist to bridge the railroad, and the structure, like Manhattan's High Line, could offer an iconic experience.

The High Line is a world famous case study the documents the civic and financial gains that accrue when an industrial landscape is transformed into a green connection. It attracts four million visitors a year, half of which are tourists. Each increment of 5,000 additional tourists equates to a demand for 400 square feet of retail space. Tourists spend \$48 on average when visiting a regimen of parks, such as Jamison Square, Tanner Springs Fields Park, and Centennial Mills would provide. The key, of course, is to create a connection and a definitive public space to activate a range of experiences along the Willamette River.

Portland's reputation as a premier green city is predicated on long-standing policy of integrating public and private investment for the community good. The 1903 Portland Parks Plan was designed to develop, John Charles Olmsted wrote, "healthfulness, morality, intelligence, and business prosperity."

I hope your office will choose to build on this legacy.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Ciolkosz
1355 NW Everett Ave.
Portland, Oregon

