

May \_\_ 2020

Andrea Durbin, Director  
Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 7100  
Portland, OR 97201

**Re: A Multi-Dwelling Mapping Project to Meet Portland's Future Housing Needs**

Dear Ms. Durbin:

Now that Portland has updated its multi-dwelling zoning code and is well on its way to updating the code for single-dwellings, it's time to revisit the zoning map. To align our residential zoning with comp plan goals around equity, affordable housing, climate and transportation, Portland should undertake a project to strategically apply multi-dwelling zoning in some places that are now zoned single-dwelling. Here's why:

**Displacement.** Rezoning will increase housing capacity in close-in neighborhoods and thereby reduce displacement pressures on lower income and non-white residents living further from the core. Any displacement is unfortunate. But to the extent it happens, adding more multi-dwelling zoning to close-in neighborhoods would disproportionately benefit lower income Portlanders and persons of color in comparison with more affluent and whiter residents of closer-in neighborhoods.

**Affordable Housing.** Better Housing by Design makes multi-dwelling zones ideal for low income housing tax credit projects and other developments with 50-100% of units affordable. Such projects earn density and height bonuses under this zoning, allowing sponsors to compete successfully with market rate builders for land. Such zoning tends to be located near transit and services, which is critical for low income residents. Finally, with the passage of Portland and Metro bond measures for affordable housing, we finally have significant public resources to develop more of it. Affordable housing development will follow the zoning; let's steer it to close-in, affluent locations best served by transit and within walking distance of downtown!

(Note: Mixed use zones don't work as well for affordable housing as one might expect, because ground floor commercial uses trigger BOLI wage rates, which can make projects financially infeasible)

**Inclusionary Housing.** Inclusionary housing combined with multi-dwelling zoning yields regulated affordable housing within market rate development of 20+ units. To the extent multi-dwelling development is market rate, some of it would automatically create regulated affordable units. Under single-dwelling zoning this won't happen.

**Climate benefits:** The most climate friendly housing options are close-in (reducing car trips and travel time), small, and attached. Increasing the amount of land zoned for this type of housing will create more carbon-light housing options in Portland.

**Reducing conflicts along commercial corridors.** Adding a ‘halo’ of multi-dwelling zoning around commercial strips will provide a step-down buffer to abutting single dwelling neighborhoods. This would avoid the current situation where 4-5 story zoning immediately abuts 2-story residential neighborhoods, sometimes creating conflicts.

We understand that the BPS budget will be very tight going forward, yet we believe there is no better time to align our residential zoning with our planning goals. Construction is hit hard during recessions, and opening up more building opportunities would be a stimulus for the industry, and it doesn’t require any extra funding. This would get workers back to work, provide safe and affordable living for those hard hit by this pandemic and get property taxes and other revenue flowing back to local governments for the services communities need. It would also reduce displacement pressures on the neighborhoods further east. It could be a win for everyone.