

Letter from Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives

Dear Mayor Hales and Commissioners,

For over 20 years, PCRI has committed to provide stable, affordable homes for the community. PCRI's unique mix of over 700 affordable single-family residences, small multi-plexes and community apartments are dispersed among more than a third of Portland's neighborhoods. These homes exemplify the valuable array of housing types which contribute to the fabric of our neighborhoods and provide varied housing options to meet the needs of an economically and culturally diverse community. However, as we know, there remains an immense gap in Portland's housing supply in terms of quantity, affordability, and scale.

While the proposals put forth in the Residential Infill Project Concept Report cannot be the singular solution for housing needs in our city, they deliver important opportunities to expand on housing offerings, including opportunities to provide more affordable homes for those that need them. By thoughtfully utilizing Portland's existing land as proposed in the report, we can simultaneously encourage smaller-scale development which complements surrounding homes, provides more homes in existing neighborhoods with robust services and infrastructure, and reduces the cost of development when new homes are constructed by spreading land costs among multiple units or allowing underutilized parcels to be divided and developed more easily.

PCRI has always recognized the important role that access to housing—and especially homeownership—plays in addressing historical inequities and families' abilities to achieve self-sufficiency. If implemented, the Residential Infill Project's recommendations afford greater opportunity for PCRI and other land owners to develop additional homes and respond to Portland's current housing shortage. For example, PCRI owns a rental duplex on N. Mason Street. Unless the existing duplex is demolished, development is currently limited to the existing structure, which only occupies the eastern half of its parcel. The Infill Project's recommendations would allow the existing duplex to remain and the vacant half of the parcel to be developed, which PCRI hopes to do in order to provide opportunity for lower-income first-time homebuyers. At other sites, ease of creating flag lots as recommended by the Infill Project would reduce development costs and better utilize land without impacting existing homes. These scenarios also exemplify how the proposal supports smaller scale, complementary development additions, rather than the concerns around demolition that have been raised. These are just two examples out of many. I am happy to meet in person to provide additional detail or other examples.

PCRI also recommends that the Residential Infill Project go further by more explicitly incentivizing affordability and homes whose design inclusively reflects the needs of Portland's communities.

As such, reasonable density bonuses should be added back into the Residential Infill Project as originally proposed in the June 2016 draft Concept Report:

- * Allow an additional bonus unit [or increased FAR] for providing an affordable unit, an accessible unit, or internally converting an existing house

- * Allow additional bonus unit [or increased FAR] in cottage clusters for providing affordable units, accessible units, or for retaining the existing house on the site

The recommendations of the Residential Infill Project are an important piece in the puzzle that addresses Portland's current housing shortage. Every unit counts and I see great value in the recommendations proposed in the Concept Reports. I look forward to staying involved as the process continues.

Sincerely,

Travis Phillips
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