

Division Design Initiative

TOP TEN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PORTLAND

The following are proactive solutions based on broad community input to fix current planning and zoning policies. The intent is a no net density loss approach to encourage additional infill density with fewer impacts.

Background: Recent development on Division is a sharp contrast to its traditional small-scale main street character and form. We have seen a great deal of new development that often feature flat facades and rooflines, large blank walls, inconsistency in quality of materials, as well as privacy, light, noise, parking, and traffic impacts that have caused significant community design concerns. Much of this development has occurred despite more than 2-years of community outcry expressed in the media, public testimony, letters, surveys and neighborhood meetings. **As we plan our growth strategy** in the Comprehensive Plan and new Mixed Use Zone changes proposed by the City's MUZ Advisory Committee, **we can - through more context sensitive design - encourage compact density and infill that meet our population goals within our urban corridors in a more unifying, intentional manner that preserves what is special and character-defining while allowing us to grow into a more compact city.**



1 Improve notification and enable constructive community engagement about growth Eight large buildings in 18-24 months is major redevelopment, yet the neighborhood had no meaningful opportunity for real input. (See [DDI Notification and Community Engagement Policy Recommendations](#))

2 Close the Residential Floor Area Ratio Code Gap Now - There is currently no Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirement for the residential portion of mixed use buildings which results in overly boxy, bulky buildings as projects build to the maximum envelope allowed. The City (through their Mixed Use Zones Proposal) is recommending this be fixed as part of the Comprehensive Plan adoption but it would not take effect until 2017. We recommend this be a top priority for the City to take immediate action to fix now.



3 Add Permit Review Criteria for Assessing Compatibility with Neighborhood Context (see draft *Division Design guidelines Compatibility section & comment letter to the City of Portland Hearings Examiner re: land use appeal by Brentwood Darlington Neighborhood*). Request additional permit submittal requirements be added including:

- a. Elevations showing proposed development in context of adjacent building/block development,
- b. Solar shading analysis, privacy and view impact drawing
- c. Statement of features/approaches used to demonstrate alignment with community design goals and preferences if formal guidelines exist
- d. If no parking is required, provide a transportation demand management plan for mitigation of impacts (this could include annual bus passes for residents, shared/conjunctive use parking, on site car or bike-share options, etc.)



Older, smaller neighborhoods with more traditional main street character and buildings of one and two stories need better review requirements to assess compatibility with neighborhood context and adjacent residential. Good transitions in scale, screening, articulated massing and design features make the difference. The best projects are innovative in design, of durable quality materials, and show respect for the neighborhood by reflecting design preferences and desired features (note: "reflect" does not =replicate), rather than rejecting existing neighborhood architectural patterns.

4 Develop Density Transition Zones & Foster the “Missing Middle” – The Current Comp Plan Growth Strategy focuses on corridors and centers but leaves out small-medium “plexes”, town/rowhouses, and courtyard style housing (promoted in the past with the City’s “Courtyard housing design competition”). These building types may blend better within the existing neighborhood fabric and could help relieve some of the development pressure on older commercial corridors with special character like Division, Hawthorne, etc. (See *Eli Spevak proposal, and Metro Innovative Design & Development Codes – Transitions Section*)



Missing Middle - Good Example of medium-scale sensitive infill designed increased density at 25th & Division: Three new modern rowhouses blend in with neighborhood scale, details and simple variation of windows and patterns without being overly repetitious.

5 Create Incentives for Reuse & Preservation of Existing Buildings with Special Community character - Are there some areas where we don’t want the zoning to transfer automatically? As shown in the study noted below, retaining a mix of diverse building vintages and sizes has been proven to encourage economic vitality, more diversity, a greater number of jobs, less chain stores, and more affordability for small businesses and tenants. We may need other incentives that support adaptive reuse of these such as waivers of SDC, transfer of development rights (not just for historic properties), etc. (See *Report on “Older, Smaller, Better: Measuring how the character of buildings and blocks influences urban vitality”, by Preservation Green Lab, National Trust for Historic Preservation, May 2014*)



Older buildings with streetcar era main street character are scattered along our East-West Portland corridors. These often have been in disuse or disrepair but may be important buildings of quality materials and significant character that when preserved create areas of distinction and identity. Many feature common design characteristics such as recessed entries, raised sills, large storefront windows with small clerestory windows above, articulated rooflines, deco or craftsman details, brick or wood exteriors, and often angled cut façade entrances on corner buildings. Let’s preserve these special buildings and make it easier to do so with good incentives. The greenest building is the one you aren’t building...but perhaps the one you are adapting.



“Pearl on the String” Commercial Node- Cluster of Commercial at 20th-22nd & SE Division Street, including Bar Avignon, Mirador, New Seasons, and multiple eateries.

6 Relate Building Height to Street Width & Consider Nodal Focus.

Set different goals for narrow vs. wider streets and focus some density into nodes – visualize a “Pearls on a String” concept with the pearls as the commercial focus with residential or lower scale development as the string. This was a priority expressed for future development in the Division Green Street Main Street Plan. (See *Urbsworks Policy Recommendations, Division Green Street Main Street Plan*)



→ C www.emerick-architects.com/projects/sketchbook-division-stree ☆ 🔍

SE DIVISION STREET

This industrial home is the poster child for adaptive reuse. Starting with a building that intermingled three structures from different periods over the last century, we reused the existing structures, as well as adding a penthouse and a roof garden to create an urban oasis. Furthermore, with almost 2000 square feet of solar arrays, this project is practically off-the-grid. Marrying practicality with craftsmanship, almost everything was handmade locally from raw materials by Portland artisans including cabinetry, steel work, railings, doors stairs, lighting fixtures and stucco.

7 Consider Incentives in new Mixed Use Proposal for community amenities, including: high performance buildings/zero energy buildings, preservation and adaptive reuse of older buildings, provision of reasonably priced housing, and alternative transit-oriented or other community beneficial uses (daycare, small corner grocery stores, affordable/senior housing). Incentives may include waivers of SDC’s, fast track permitting, bonus in square footage, or other benefits.

8 Incorporate solar policy into zoning code amendments to support more high performance buildings and minimize/mitigate solar shading of adjacent infill – Encourage further study of more N/S corridor density which has less shading impacts than on E/W corridors. (See *New Buildings Institute Policy, state solar access policy OR 227.190, and other Oregon community solar policies such as Ashland, Jackson County, et al*).

Adaptive Reuse of older structure with

POSITIVE EXAMPLES



Good example of adaptive reuse with new construction that is both modern and uses traditional materials of wood and metal, balconies, generous storefronts and stepped roofs. Residential above turns inward to a central open air courtyard that helps avoid privacy impacts and maintains access to air and light.



Move the House Project: Example of positive building form in newer construction, sustainable design elements including:

- breaking up building massing into sections with 4th floor upper roof stepbacks, balconies, and articulation,
- creating transparency with glass skybridge and pedestrian paseos,
- references similar storefront window patterns in nearby older blocks
- incorporation of art and education through sculpture and interpretive signage
- Green features such as living roofs, bioswales at rear, and preservation and design around a mature tree, and mov-

9 Enhance/maintain community livability through access to sun, air, light, privacy and public views for current and new residents/businesses. Address privacy issues via increased requirements for placement of and side setbacks to maintain air and light (e.g. varied rooflines, lightwells, stepbacks and stepdowns in heights), minimize privacy impacts (i.e. increased rear landscape screening requirements, sensitive location of balconies), protection of important viewsheds (e.g. reduction of large blank walls, maintain public view of community monuments such as the Hollywood Theater, Bagdad Theater, SE Hills). (These issues influence mixed use zoning requirements in development; also see Urbsworks research on lightwells and consideration of upper level skyplane context in NY Code; DDI Comment Letter to the City of Portland Re: Comp Plan & Mixed Use Zones)

10 The City should employ broader tracking of and accountability for development impacts. Portland, and state of Oregon do not require documentation nor impacts analysis resulting from a new development beyond fee impacts to traffic, sewer and parks. However most states require this. Critical issues could be documented during permit submittal and review. Recommended issues to be tracked should include impacts to:

- a. Health (e.g., noise, air quality, safety)
- b. Environment (e.g., loss of habitat, mature trees/heat island effect, climate change)
- c. Community (e.g., loss of historic resources, important public viewsheds)
- d. Economy (e.g., loss of affordable residential and commercial spaces, loss of solar access for energy generation, food production, etc.)

***“What gets measured, gets managed.
What doesn’t get measured gets lost.”***

Let’s not lose track of the things that matter most.

Want to take action?

1. **Comment on these draft recommendations** – email ilovedivision@gmail.com with specific edits.
2. **Ask your Neighborhood or Business Association to take a position on these recommendations.** Contact: *Richmond NA* - richmondjdx@gmail.com; *Division/Clinton Business Assoc.* - dcbakatje@gmail.com
3. **Write a letter to the City expressing your support for any or all of these recommendations** Contact: cputestimony@portlandoregon.gov, **note, for testimony it must include your name and address!**