

PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Release, May 25, 2020

Sellwood-Moreland Adopts Main Street Design Guidelines

On May 20, 2020, new Sellwood-Moreland Main Street Design Guidelines were unanimously adopted by the Sellwood Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) Board of Directors. These advisory guidelines are intended to clarify community goals for design in the core commercial main street area including SE Milwaukie and SE 17th, SE 13th, SE Bybee, and Tacoma.

"Main streets are the lifeblood of Portland's neighborhoods and local business districts." said Heather Flint Chatto, Director of PDX Main Streets. "We find that with tools for neighborhoods to establish a vision and develop their priorities for the future, communities are better able to communicate with designers and developers. When development fits local guidelines, there is often greater acceptance of growth because it fosters sensitive infill that fits the area's goals and is respectful of their unique identity."

The guidelines are an educational tool that highlights local design and building patterns, identifies community design preferences, and documents a vision for an evolving community with vibrant main streets and an enhanced streetscape. These advisory guidelines can help support more compatible, aesthetically harmonious growth while adding needed housing, services and streetscape improvements as the neighborhood evolves. Learn more about the design guidelines at www.pdxmainstreets.org/sellwood-moreland.

The guidelines were developed by representatives from the SMILE Land Use Committee, the Sellwood-Moreland Business Alliance (SMBA), donated support from PDX Main Streets and technical support from design consultants Forage Design, and Qamar Architecture & Town Planning. The year-and-a-half-long public process included public workshops and walking tours, community surveys, outreach at local markets, studying local design patterns, outreach by SMILE list serves, Nextdoor postings, participant lists, Facebook and Instagram, articles in the news, and through SMBA outreach lists.

"It's been a great process to partner with the Sellwood-Moreland community to raise awareness about the important role of design in making better density that fits in. This isn't about style, nor traditionalism versus modernism, but about foundational patterns of our city that are notable across all our streetcar era neighborhood main streets, and throughout our city. Timeless design patterns are frequently in fact much more affordable even in tall buildings," said Laurence Qamar, local architect on the project. "Often design concerns are dismissed as a barrier to affordability, however this is generally a myth. Many new buildings are unnecessarily expensive due to arbitrary exaggerated elements on the street fronts. Using best practice approaches commonly found in traditional buildings save cost through stacking floor plates and aligning openings, avoiding cantilevers that use expensive structural steel," says Laurence Qamar.

"Everyone deserves good design," notes Flint Chatto. "To foster more equitable, affordable housing and greater support for density in the city, we need to address both the practice and product, and ensure robust, inclusive public engagement in these sweeping policy decisions so that all voices are heard and local planning is valued." Our streetcars were the most formative land use influence in shaping our city, and the resulting streetcar main streets are a defining identity for our City that fuels heritage tourism and serve as hubs for neighborhood services and great walkable communities. They represent some of our greatest civic and economic assets. "With many of our historic areas not designated as historic districts, it is even more important to have main street design guidelines and standards in place. Main streets need even more support to keep them economically vibrant, and as more and more people work from home and rely on our local neighborhood services, their health and success become even more critical. With new policy being reviewed now for updated citywide design standards and guidelines (the DOZA Project), it is a missed opportunity if we under-value our most character defining city places. Our streetcar main streets need a different approach to design and more support for climate-responsive approaches that incentivize building additions and adaptive reuse over demolition, as well as retaining cultural resources, and maintaining naturally occurring affordable housing and legacy businesses."

As part of the DOZA project's 30-year update to citywide design policy, communities have asked for main street design standards and compatibility tools like context elevations to evaluate design as part of permitting requirements. Although concern about these gaps seem to fall on deaf ears at the Planning and Design Commissions, neighborhoods and business districts continue to advocate for policy changes in DOZA and to create the tools on their own, which is no small task. In lieu of City policy, these local guidelines are valuable to help educate and empower communities with resources to both see their local design patterns, and to know how to ask for what they want instead of what they don't. This sets clearer expectations for developers and can speed the process. "We are thrilled to have these new tools that document our vision and give us the language we need to encourage better compatibility and livability from new developments." said David Schoellhamer, Chair of the SMILE Land Use Committee.

Portland Main Streets Design Initiative | The Portland Main Streets Design Initiative (PDX Main Streets) supports communities with technical design assistance, planning tools, education and policy advocacy to advance design literacy and innovation. The organization is responsible for creating the transformational Main Street Design Guidelines that have been adopted by eight businesses and neighborhoods for eight streets throughout Southeast Portland including Hawthorne, Division, Woodstock, and multiple streets in Sellwood-Moreland. PDX Main Streets is known for creative engagement, artful education and outreach, and for championing community voices for more inclusive and equitable policy making. Contact: Heather Flint Chatto, Director, PDX Main Streets | ilovepdxmainstreets@gmail.com | www.pdxmainstreets.org | Follow us: @ilovepdxmainstreets | 541.915.0120

Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League (SMILE): SMILE is one of 95 neighborhood associations recognized by the City of Portland. SMILE is involved in land use and transportation issues, environmental stewardship of our parks and natural areas, sponsoring annual neighborhood events including Sundae in the Park, an Easter Egg Hunt, and Neighborhood Clean-up Day, planning for emergencies, crime prevention, and preserving local history. More information is at sellwood.org. Contact: David Schoellhamer, Chair of the SMILE Land Use Committee. Email: land-use-chair@sellwood.org. Website: www.sellwood.org/land-use

Laurence Qamar, Architect & Town Planner: Qamar & Associates Inc. | qamararchitecture.com | l.qamar@comcast.net. Qamar consults from his Portland office with local jurisdictions, neighborhood organizations, and community developers to create vibrant, sustainable, and enduring mixed-use, walkable communities in the NW Region and nationally.

Forge Design + Planning | Forge Design creates reformed spaces and renewed places through sustainable design and planning. We value design approaches that are place-based, sustainable, and multifunctional to serve diverse uses and community needs. We draw on existing resources where possible, to create low-impact, green planning and design approaches that are inspired by the people, culture, and context of each place.

Contact: Heather Flint Chatto, Owner, Urban Planner & Environmental Designer, LEED AP | www.foragedesign.org | foragedesigner@gmail.com | follow us: @foragedesign.planning

