

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More downtown St. Johns development concerns

(Letters are welcome and encouraged on all subjects. To share your ideas, concerns, and/or thoughts, send letters to the addresses listed above.)

Working group member concerns

Dear Editor,

As an original member of the Citizen Working Group (CWG) for the St. Johns/Lombard Plan, I am very interested in the discussion regarding the proposed Union at St. Johns project located at Lombard and Richmond which includes a re-design of the traffic island such that the city will allow the slip lane to be removed and the building to intrude into the vacated space. As noted by others, this will effectively construct a 4-story wall right at a strategic entrance to the business district. This was not the intent of the CWG. While the Plan itself does not discuss this intersection at length, the issue was an important topic of discussion at multiple CWG meetings. The design ultimately adopted as an element of the Plan came about due to feedback received from both St. Johns residents and businesses. At that time, the concerns revolved around excessive traffic speeds, crossing safety and the importance of the intersection as an iconic entry point into the business district. Many business owners felt that when through traffic was diverted off of Lombard and onto Ivanhoe, the business district suffered tremendously. With entry into the slip lane being located to the east, it was opinioned that potential shoppers were already committed to the Richmond / Ivanhoe bypass before they even realized there was a business district. By eliminating the slip and installing traffic signals at the intersection, drivers would be able to see the business district while waiting for the signal to change. As I recall, the consensus of the CWG was that the slip lane would be removed, but the plaza would remain (and be enlarged). Obviously a brick wall would stymie the intent.

Please note that in addition to the Plan document itself, there were multiple studies prepared to provide background information used in the formulation of the Plan. The background work was performed by the Bureau of Planning along with contractors engaged by the City. Members of the CWG reviewed a large amount of information over a 2-1/2 year period, including the various studies and reports prepared by contractors, the Portland Harbor Industrial Lands Study (Part One and Part Two), and the St. Johns Truck Study, along with feedback generated by Community Outreach efforts, Neighborhood Walks, Open Houses, Visioning Workshops, and input from the affected neighborhood and business associations.

Background information regarding the re-design of the intersection and of Ivy Island can be found in the Urban Development Concept Report prepared in May 2003 by Lennertz Coyle & Associates along with (among others) E. D. Hovee & Company. This report has several appendixes including a Project Memorandum prepared by E. D. Hovee with the subject line "Assessment of St. John Waterfront Industrial Areas." That 8-page memo itself

incorporates various appendixes, including one identified as "Chapter 3: Alternatives Evaluation." On page 3-26 of that report is a more detailed discussion of the proposed re-design of the traffic island (Ivy Island) with several potential alternatives. Option C is the recommended design and an illustration of that option is found on page 3-26. Note the wording of the recommendation is as follows: "The project would remove the existing traffic island and shift the travel lanes on Lombard Street to the south. The gain in property to the north should be incorporated to (sic) a large sidewalk/plaza area (emphasis mine)." All of aforementioned background information is included in, and considered an official part of, the final St. Johns/Lombard Plan as adopted by the City of Portland.

I spent much time and effort assisting with the formulation of the St. Johns/Lombard Plan as a member of the CWG and would hate to see my efforts, and the efforts of many others, cast aside to accommodate a real estate developer in a quest to generate profit without regard to the intent of the residents and businesses in the St. Johns neighborhood and surrounding communities. I would hope that other members of the CWG along with Barry Manning, Senior Planner with the Bureau of Planning and Project Manager for the St. Johns/Lombard Plan, and Rich Newlands, Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT) Project Manager for the Plan, come forward to clarify the intent of the Plan vis-à-vis this particular intersection.

Gerry Howard
N. Concord Ave.

Save Ivy Island

Dear Editor,

The Saint Johns Lombard Plan (SJLP) is given as a justification for Fahd's Development. In the SJLP there are three main objectives for the Lombard /Richmond Intersection. The Fahid development fails outright on two of these, and with the remaining one, there are other reasonable alternatives that call into question the necessity of vacating public land. The following three objectives are

the benefit acquired, the trade off, for the razing of lovely Ivy Island and putting in a traffic signal. If these objectives are not met, there is no good reason for vacating the Portland City property in favor of Fahid. The objectives: 1) increase visibility into the Downtown, 2) increase walkability from the Eastside to the Westside, 3) make the Charleston/Lombard corner safe for pedestrians.

1) Currently, as traffic travels west on Lombard, we begin to see downtown at about the Oswego light. At this point we can see Signal Pizza and Peninsula Station, as we approach the curve, Tulip Bakery becomes visible, and when we are in the curve the whole of downtown is visible. The current one-story structures slope with Lombard at Ivy Island to allow this visibility. In the Fahid Development, because he squares his building at Charleston and because it's bigger and taller, you will have a four story wall of apartments that will not allow visibility into downtown St. Johns until just before you reach Fahid's proposed right turn stoplight. Fahid's Development "Fails" according to the SJLP.

2) In the SJLP, as the Lombard Slip is closed off, Ivy Island creates a barrier that protects pedestrians walking east to west (or vice versa) from the heavy traffic, noise and exhaust pollution of Alt Truck Route 30 on Richmond. This sense of safety encourages residents to leave their cars at home and walk into downtown. Fahid's Development will make walking from the Eastside to the Westside less friendly than it currently is, and also it might actually divide St Johns into an East and a West side. First, in Fahid's plan, as you walk west, you are confronted by a four story barrier to downtown in the form of apartment buildings, which you will need to walk around. The only way to walk around is the sidewalk Fahid provides, which forces the pedestrian to walk with little separating them from Alt Truck Route 30, EXACTLY AS IT IS NOW IF YOU MAKE THAT WALK ON RICHMOND! The proposal offers little enjoyment or protection to the pedestrian who wants to walk into

town. Ironically, the current slip lane is a nicer walk than Fahid's Plan for it has less vehicles and no heavy trucks. Fahid's Development "Fails" according to the SJLP.

3) For those who support Fahid's Development, the final and only justification is the blind Lombard curve and the safety issue at Charleston. With the complete razing of his lot that offers a clean slate to work with. Simply, if the sightline is moved back four feet, the curve is no longer blind. Charleston becomes as safe as Leavitt, Chicago or Baltimore. And it's all the same moderate traffic. The urgency is dissipated. At this juncture, more conventional approaches to making it safe will do. For example at John Street, safety was achieved with a crossing signal.

Ivy Island is a lovely, effective and traditional segue into the St. Johns Business District. Let's keep it. It's not over yet. The Mayor and City Council still haven't voted on this. Fahid needs their approval before his development can move forward.

I encourage all readers to write a letter asking the Mayor and the City Council NOT to vacate Ivy Island in favor of the Fahid Development. Address letters to: Portland City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave, Portland, OR 97204. More info at "Save Ivy Island" on Facebook. John Teply


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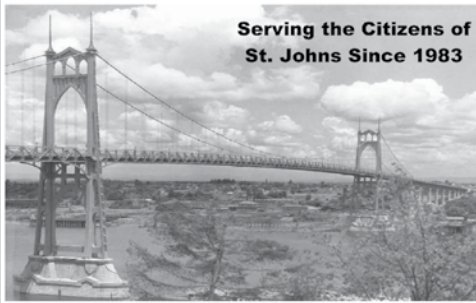


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