September 18 DRAC Meeting
DRAC Workplan Development
Membership Feedback

Peggy Moretti

1. I am very interested in how the City could incentivize more reuse of existing buildings and the conversion of commercial buildings into housing. A State tax credit that would pair with federal historic tax credits are one financial tool we've discussed previously. But I'm wondering if there are other ideas to bring forward.

2. If anyone has experience going through review with the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission, and has ideas on ways to streamline or clarify that process, I'd like to forward those ideas to the commission.

3. I'm also interested to know if our mandatory deconstruction ordinance should be expanded or altered. Perhaps we could get a short presentation from the bureau manager of that program and provide feedback on how well its fulfilling its goals of salvage and reuse.

Kym Nguyen

1. The permitting process must be designed around the needs of Portlanders. Residents and entrepreneurs should be able to obtain permits on their own with a process that is fast, predictable, and transparent. Applicants deserve visibility into requirements and completion, and permitting should move seamlessly across departments and bureaus. Consolidating intake procedures

2. Customer service and communication are also key. Options should be available for faster service, an extra-fee tier that guarantees quicker callbacks or email responses and it can help increase City's revenue. Staff responsiveness and follow-through must be strengthened, particularly across bureaus. For example, I recently experienced a disconnection between the Portland Water Bureau and PP&D in the City’s permit system. Because one bureau could not confirm whether a building basement had been removed under an existing permit, the customer was sent in circles with no resolution.

Better staff communication and shared systems would help avoid these unnecessary delays.

3. The current "Free 15-Minute Appointment" model also needs rethinking. Appointments for code and zoning questions are often unavailable for those who are not familiar with regulations, city code, with virtual appointments booked out three to four weeks. An option to pay a fee for guaranteed planner access should be considered. Additionally, perhaps, the City could contract with certified private planners who meet City standards and can provide timely, accurate guidance when staff capacity is limited.

4. The development review process should be aligned with Portland's climate adaptation goals. Permitting can better support green building, energy efficiency. It should also make it easier to retrofit existing housing and adaptively reuse older buildings, which is critical for both sustainability and affordability.

5. Portland's housing shortage and declining affordability require urgent responses. Development review should play an active role in addressing these crises which the city currently allows SDC Waiver which is an incredible idea! Transparency is especially important in the Mayor's $15 million Central City office-to-residential fund. Clear public reporting on how funds are spent, what outcomes are achieved, and how costs are distributed would build confidence.

6. Relaxed seismic requirements should be paired with clear accountability. Who is responsible for upgrades later, by when, and at what cost. This transparency would help developers and building owners make informed decisions without unpredictable liabilities. Often investors from outside of Portland are not buying brick building in Portland. How is the City of Portland able to help change that thinking & decision.

7. Maybe a Pilot Project: Falcon Building Conversion for example. The Falcon Building, now undergoing conversion from office to residential, could serve as a demonstration project. Tracking its full permitting timeline, inter-bureau coordination, costs, and regulatory hurdles would provide valuable insights. Publishing the results—challenges encountered, how they were resolved, benchmarks for timelines, and incentives that made the project feasible—would create a playbook for future conversions.

   By spotlighting one successful project, the City can demonstrate that office-to-residential conversions are not just theoretical or good headlines, but achievable in practice. This would give businesses, lenders, and housing advocates confidence to

invest in downtown Portland. If affordability targets, tax incentives, or housing programs are paired with conversions, the City can also show how revitalization can benefit a broad range of residents.

8. How does the City Administrator, the Mayor, and the Council support housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who are often unable to advocate for themselves, and how can we create livable, accessible communities for this population? One potential approach could be to allocate a small portion of System Development Charges (SDCs) from new development units to fund housing specifically for these vulnerable individuals, helping to enhance their access to safe and appropriate housing. Maybe under Affordable Housing SDC Exemption for Home Ownership - Title 30.01 should be reconsider by City Council to look at these vulnerable citizen, maybe a sub-section in this regulation just dedicate to these population so the Affordability Period is not 15 years but maybe more than 50 years, so the resale can still be affordable and not base on formulas as current rule. Based on their income around $22,000 a year allowable under Medicaid Rule to be capable of obtaining home ownership, housing affordability for these should be around $75,000 to $100,000/ unit. I would like to see a leader who is able to make a small change in Title 30.1 and lead an increase Co-Housing Development.

Eli Spevak

1. How DRAC operates
   a. Although updates on current projects and internal PP&D permit review metrics are helpful, I think the most valuable use of DRAC member time is to serve as a focus group to provide constructive feedback to staff on proposed new policies and administrative rules.

   b. When the city was developing rules for shared branch sewer lines in cottage clusters, staff conferred with a working group sub-set of DRAC members for input. This was, I think, a great use of DRAC members' time and expertise.

   c. I'd love to see this sort of focus group feedback represent the bulk of the time we spend together - particularly on topics that wouldn't otherwise be reviewed by an independent citizen review body - either because they can be handled entirely administratively or because they would go straight to city council without an interim stop at a review body (e.g. Planning Commission, Design Commission, Urban

Forestry Commission…). Examples of projects DRAC could provide feedback on include: BES/Water rules that impact development, building code update roll-outs, Building Official Determinations, … DRAC would not have a vote or the opportunity to amend - but members could draw on their experience to help inform staff decisions.

d. DRAC can also be a feedback loop for staff on how new processes or initiatives are working on-the-ground - and offer suggestions for new initiatives. Examples: Polling DRAC members for ideas on RICAP projects; Seeking suggestions from DRAC members on best practices they've seen from other jurisdictions that Portland could learn from; Collecting feedback on how new systems (e.g. using an app to call in inspections instead of a phone call) are working in practice.

2. Ideas for further improvements at PP&D
   a. Offer 30-day repeat permits for identical ADU and middle housing buildings that were previously permitted by the builder in Portland within the current code cycle. (inspired by CA state law for permitting repeat ADUs)
   b. On Oct. 1, Portland has the chance to opt in to state code to allow up to 4 stories with a single stair (as Seattle has allowed for years).
   c. Solicit customer feedback to improve service automatically, at the time of picking up permits, while it's still fresh.
   d. Revamp the Public Works review process to reduce number of reviewers and meet the city's review turn-around targets. It typically takes one engineer to prepare civil drawings. Wouldn't it be great if the city could have 1 person review them? (as happens in Minneapolis)
   e. Actively seek out best practice suggestions from similarly sized jurisdictions elsewhere in the country that have succeeded at improving permit review times.