



*King Neighborhood Association
4815 NE 7th Avenue, Portland OR*

September 10, 2013

Stephen Green and Sara King
Portland Development Commission
222 NW 5th Avenue
Portland, OR 97209

Dear Stephen and Sara:

The purpose of the King Neighborhood Association, in pertinent part, is “to enhance the livability of the neighborhood and Portland by establishing and maintaining an open line of communication and liaison among the neighborhood [and] government agencies...” Pursuant to this purpose, we are writing you today to communicate our concerns about development of the remaining Vanport parcel at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Alberta Street, as well as citizen involvement in decisions about city-financed development in inner North/Northeast more generally.

As neighbors deeply interested in the development of the last major empty commercial corner in our neighborhood, we seek to ensure that any plan to build on this parcel of land meets the criteria for success laid out through years of planning and neighborhood input.

In particular, we seek to uphold the PDC’s own stated goal of a revitalization of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard for the purpose of “a corridor that promotes local wealth creation, engages and benefits a diverse group of stakeholders, and creates a livable and functional main street” (Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Updated Action Plan, June 2008). As a central node of our neighborhood, the remaining Vanport lot is central to each of these long-term goals for the fostering of a vibrant commercial boulevard in our neighborhood. *Any development at this location should enhance the local economy in the fullest possible manner.*

We hear, *sotto voce*, from time to time that developers are working on plans for the final Vanport parcel, and we heard the outline of a proposal that the PDC was unsatisfied with, earlier this year. We urge the PDC to keep community-generated plans for this site in mind when assessing development proposals. We also urge the Commission to embrace a process of inclusion that involves neighbors and nearby business owners in helping to shape the future of this deeply important site for our neighborhood.

With the disbanding of the Interstate Urban Renewal Area Public Advisory Committee and its ilk, we urge the Portland Development Commission to seek new ways to engage the public in decisions about the direction of planning and developing neighborhoods. A Commission that shuts out public input, or relies on it only in a weak sense, operates with a faulty sense of democratic decision-making. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Updated Action Plan of calls for the Commission to “practice broad, inclusive public involvement.” As neighbors we seek to partner with the PDC in constructing and maintaining robust, participatory democracy. Instead of a turn towards the suppression of citizen engagement, we can, together, engage our community partners in developing innovative and creative changes to our neighborhood, through dialogue that is truly inclusive.

Sincerely,

Alan Silver, Chair, King Neighborhood Association