

Home Forward
1605 NE 45th Ave
Portland, OR 97213

RE: Peaceful Villa Redevelopment

On behalf of the Richmond Neighborhood Association (RNA), we are writing to express support for affordable housing and to advocate for community engagement via an open house with the community to create an open forum for information sharing and constructive dialogue. At our RNA meeting on December 12, 2022, our board discussed the following topics and voted to send this letter.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to participate on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and your attendance to brief the neighborhood association on the project on two occasions earlier this year. We have included some feedback and recommendations for public engagement based on participant suggestions for your consideration on page 3 of the letter as well.

Because this development is a significant change and impact, **we would like to invite Home Forward to partner with the Richmond Neighborhood Association to host a project open house**, ideally in-person on a weekend when more community members might attend. The goals would be to give the community a chance to learn about the project and give input on the design plans and drawings. This engagement is intended to help support the design team in leveraging local knowledge and context information, answer questions, and dispel myths while fostering trust and openness in the planning process.

PRIORITIES & CONCERNS

The intent of this letter is to advocate for affordable housing through a community open house. By supporting positive opportunities for dialogue, an informed process and meaningful public engagement. Below are the topics we have identified that have been raised by multiple CAC representatives with the RNA and we have heard community concerns and priorities about the following:

- 1) **Onsite Daycare** - we understand this is a shared desire to include in the project and are concerned to learn there are barriers legally that prevent it due to triggering BOLI/prevaling wages associated with the Davis-Bacon Act. We feel strongly that this is something that makes a large project like this work better for our current and future Peaceful Villa neighbors and would like to advocate on behalf of this where possible both for this project and for others in the future that Home Forward are part of. If there are creative solutions possible, we would like to discuss these. If not, we would like to understand why not, and how to advocate as individuals in the community as this is an essential service that is important to making a better housing project and a more healthy community in the long-term.
- 2) **Plaza Design - Kiosk & Multi-lingual Peaceful Villa Peace Pole** - We appreciate the plaza design element and are following up on a request from the design team which had asked for feedback on design features from the community. Here are a few ideas:
 - a) **Peace Pole(s)** - We have several [peace poles on Hawthorne reflecting 17 languages of our community](#). Peaceful Villa would seem to be a wonderful opportunity to have one or more features and we would love to discuss how RNA might support a multicultural art installation reflecting the languages of the



people in Peaceful Villa and the surrounding community to honor local culture and strengthen community identity.

- b) **Community Kiosk** - A PV resident noted that they didn't know when Richmond Neighborhood meetings were because our newsletters don't get delivered to individual residents. She suggested it be posted in a kiosk and this sparked an idea based on her recommendation. PDX Main Streets does placemaking support and they would be very interested in working with you on a kiosk. The RNA is part of a loose coalition of NAs that work with PDX Main Streets. You can learn a little about their kiosk project here: www.pdxmainstreets.org/kioskdesign and see a similar pilot [here](#) of a solar powered kiosk already under construction with seating bench and phone charging at the WeShine Houseless Village which just received a PCEF assistance grant for the solar equipment and design drawings. Similar locking display cases to post information and a phone charging component might encourage more community interaction of internal and external residents. Ideally, it could be an opportunity for postings of the site's unique history, a wayfinding map, info about community events, the solar on the Peaceful Villa buildings and other green features of the project (which we applaud!), as well as emergency routes, contact numbers for reaching management or safety info, etc. It would be lovely if we might include a placeholder for a kiosk in the plaza of whatever variety, that could serve both PV residents and the community. It could be a win-win for all, something for everyone, and an opportunity to activate the plaza, foster information sharing and education, create trust-building and greater connection.



- 3) **Facade Design Elevations** - We really appreciate how much the design team has already been doing to use our PDX Main Streets Design Guidelines and value the techniques used to orient the narrow ends of the development to the street to visually minimize the bulk of the buildings and relate to the context. Thank you! One thing that is missing however is that to date we have not seen draft elevations of the larger long facades. It would be great to see this shared at an open house for input. We also see some very long stretches of buildings in rough perspectives on the landscape illustrations but have not seen actual elevations so that would be great to have at an open house as perhaps a few other design techniques can similarly employ some timeless low-cost approaches that humanize larger buildings for greater success and comfort of all residents within the village and surrounding it.
- 4) **Impact Analysis** - We really want to stress that we are writing to support both the community and affordable housing. Advocating for these typical studies is NOT an attempt to add delays nor stop the project in any way but to fully understand the impacts, to plan for any possible mitigation. An impact analysis process can be valuable data to inform and refine the design to best serve the needs of Home Forward clients and the surrounding community. Impact analysis is something RNA has been advocating for over time on many previous occasions. The intent is by having the data, we can work collaboratively to find creative solutions.
- a) **Environmental Assessment (EA)** - We understand this is already required. We would like to provide input to the scope of work so that the EA is on the right track from the beginning and avoid any delays to the project. Additionally, we want to be sure the EA meets HUD's requirement to identify, analyze, and evaluate all impacts to determine the significance of their effects. For example, with a large volume of redevelopment, and existing issues already experienced due to an aging sewer and water system, it is critical we have adequate capacity to meet this proposed increase in new development.

b) Traffic & Parking Study - include Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies.

We understand this is being considered and would like to encourage adding TDM strategies as part of the scope of work. This is advisable for projects over 50 units, so while RNA is not weighing in on parking amounts, knowing the potential number and mix of residents makes a difference as to those likely to use alternative transit. As senior housing, most are less likely to drive and can take transit. However, with a shift to more family oriented housing (which we need and appreciate!), we recognize there is a big difference in the likelihood of more auto-dependent residents (e.g. parents with small children that may necessitate driving due to time, work, exposure to covid, etc) that may be a change from the original impacts. If the study showed a greater impact, TDM strategies might include things like one or more car-share vehicles, annual bus passes, etc. If the intersection impacts are great, perhaps some traffic calming measures might be warranted. In addition, traffic volumes on the existing Neighborhood Greenway and designated bike routes need to be identified and protective measures developed. Finally, the impact on neighborhood circulation, including cut-through traffic, related to the extension of Woodward needs to be identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

We appreciate the opportunity to have a CAC process. Please know that while we are bringing these suggestions forward, they are intended as suggestions for how Home Forward can foster more affordable housing with a positive community process that builds greater acceptance, understanding, and community cohesion.

Concern: Please see our CAC representative's email from 11.8.22 following the last meeting with questions, suggestions, and comments. No response was received. We understand that similarly other CAC member communications have not received direct responses to communications, and some adjacent residents have received little to no information on the project. While we appreciate that Fact Sheets have been shared with the CAC which address some points of concern and questions, this is one-way communication and is less than the desired two-way dialogue responses we hope we can anticipate going forward.

Recommendations: To facilitate more community knowledge about the project, the five Peaceful Villa Fact Sheets provided by Home Forward have been shared on our Richmond website with the community here: <https://richmondpx.org/peaceful-villa>. Of note, in the [Community Engagement fact sheet](#), it describes the IAP2 Public Involvement scale and an "Aspire to Involve" goal. To foster this, we hope that you will consider the following recommendations. These recommendations are from multiple members of the Peaceful Villa CAC that have decades of professional experience in engagement and are offered as proactive suggestions for longer term success in future efforts.

- 1) **Evaluate & Advance Equitable Engagement of Home Forward Processes with Consultant Support:** We understand you are centering the voices of people already in Peaceful Villa. That makes sense. In the process of uplifting some voices that have been marginalized in the past, it is also important however that people don't feel minimized (e.g. leaving only 3 minutes for the non-residents at the last CAC meeting). We encourage the Home Forward Board to move further on the IAP2 scale by engaging an equity and community engagement consultant to assist. This is what public agencies in Portland and elsewhere are doing and a best practice to inform planning. We want to support Home Forward to have a robust and successful community relationship in the long term too.
- 2) **Integrate CAC and Focus Group Meetings Concurrently:** Keep doing a CAC meeting process but don't leave them out of the Focus Group phase and start the CAC after. Many participants have expressed to RNA that they felt left out of a critical phase when four meetings had already

happened prior to the CAC, so this was late in the Conceptual Design process. Start the CAC from the get go, and integrate focus sessions with stakeholder groups to build better buy-in.

- 3) **Give 3 options for conceptual site designs in future projects.** The process started with a fairly set design at the CAC in terms of building footprints so that has created more friction rather than openness and creative solutions that those who know the context might be able to bring if there is a bit more ability to give meaningful input. For Peaceful Villa, the EA requires alternatives and they need to be realistic and viable options.
- 4) **Best Practices for Engaging CAC members:** Send meeting materials that will be discussed a week in advance so community members can be oriented about the topics and materials for best productivity. Send a quick feedback survey at the end to capture more input. Some PV residents and others may not always feel comfortable sharing, or there is not enough time. These two simple steps help people feel informed, heard and included.
- 5) **Host an Open House with us in January:** Help communities build trust with you in the process and project. The redevelopment project has highlighted underlying existing issues of concern. Trust and healing is needed with the Peaceful Villa residents and surrounding community and we value the opportunity of this project to help us learn about where there have been past issues (safety, abandoned cars, trash, feeling welcome, etc). The involvement process isn't a magic bullet but it does present an opportunity for a more positive collaborative path in the future with trust-building in the process with Home Forward as well. That happens when all sides feel safe to speak out without fear (including those at Peaceful Villa that have expressed fear of retribution of losing their housing if they speak out). It is deeply important to our neighborhood that all are heard and valued to lift ALL of our community. Having a space for open dialogue (both informally with the design team to look at the plans and design boards, and as a group discussion at the event on the topics above with PV residents and the larger community about the project design) will help us build trust with each other and with you. We want to be a partner in that process so we create more than just new housing but a supportive environment that is as welcoming as possible to all our residents.

We hope that our letter lands with the intent it was written, i.e. to support your team as collaborators, community partners and advocates for all our community members and to support your organization in its success on other affordable housing projects as well. We have many knowledgeable community members who want to help and support housing in our community, whether from decades of public involvement, long range planning, lived experience in affordable housing, in-depth lived experience in the community, artists and housing and community health advocates that can be assets to building-in success for your staff and the long-term cohesion and operation of Peaceful Villa as it evolves.

We hope we can meet to discuss an open house event with you and look forward to being in touch soon.

Sincerely,

Richmond Neighborhood Association Board

CC: Richmond Board, BORA Design Team, Home Forward Board, Peaceful Villa CAC