



August 30th, 2023

To: Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and City Commissioners
RE: Support for permitting consolidation (Agenda Item 714 on 8/30/2023)

Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners:

We are writing on behalf of thousands of businesses and individuals seeking to address our region’s biggest issues by building the housing, infrastructure, and jobs that make Portland livable and economically vibrant. **In advance of charter reform implementation, we strongly urge council to approve a resolution that will unify the city’s fragmented permitting functions into a single entity.**

Builders working in Portland have long known that one of the biggest housing problems in the city is the City itself. At its most basic fault, permitting in Portland has been too disjointed to work well. There are no clear chains of command, no uniform technology, no singular payment processing system, and no authority to resolve disputes or conflicts in code. Accounting for normal revisions and corrections, it can take anywhere from 6-12 months just to get approval to begin building new housing.

Mirroring the city’s outdated commission-form of governance, these inefficiencies were compounded when new building code requirements were passed over the last decade. Among other things, the city passed new regulations for bike storage, tree removal, inclusionary housing, demolitions, parking, glazing, first-floor active use, and middle housing. Many of these are positive and important, but each added regulation has come with associated costs and fees, often leading to competing priorities and inconsistent decisions, making it difficult for staff and builders to determine an ultimate authority.

This is why we support both ongoing code-clean-up initiatives and efforts that will result in a single permitting entity. We’re confident that accomplishing both will result in increased housing production and economic development. If planned and funded well, we can ensure all permit types are processed in a timely and efficient manner, fostering a more equitable and productive building environment.

We fully support Resolution 714 which will lead to the unification of permitting functions in Portland. Having an integrated source for permitting information, expertise, and authority will improve Portland’s ability to meet the needs of our businesses and communities.

Thank you for your thoughtful work in developing this proposal and for your commitment to supporting pro-housing initiatives such as this.

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Co-signed:

Carmen Castro
Executive Director
Hispanic Metro Chamber

Dana Shephard
Executive Director
Portland Housing Center

Dominique Merriweather
Executive Director
Proud Ground

Ellen Wax
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