



Kenton Neighborhood Association
2209 N Schofield St.
Portland, OR 97217

Mayor Charlie Hales
mayorcharliehales@portlandoregon.gov

December 22, 2016

Re: Pod village proposal for Kenton neighborhood

Dear Mayor Hales,

The Kenton Neighborhood Association (KNA) was recently notified that a temporary transitional housing project is proposed for placement within our neighborhood. On behalf of our organization and the residents we represent, we would like to share some concerns and questions we have regarding the “Argyle Village” proposal and share with you our vision and wishes for moving forward with this project.

At our board meeting on Wednesday December 14th, Ben Mauro, Marc Jolin, Trell Anderson and Nathan Howard presented the proposal to our board members and the approximately two dozen neighbors in attendance. The KNA appreciates these representatives taking the time to speak with our community—particularly in light of the complications presented by the snowstorm that evening. We value being engaged while a proposal is in its early stages to provide comment, however, the information presented to us that evening was lacking in critical elements of the initial planning process and further discussion is necessary. Several essential questions and concerns were raised, many of which remain unanswered but could be addressed through goal setting and continued communication.

Two days after the meeting, the KNA was made aware of a previously planned event billed as a “Closing Reception [for] Argyle Village.” Though the list of invitees was extensive and included numerous stakeholders and involved parties, KNA and Kenton residents were not invited or notified, nor was this event mentioned by the proposal representatives at our meeting. Considering that the representatives emphasized their desire for our involvement and support, it was extremely disappointing to find that we were excluded from this event, even if unintentionally. Amplifying our concern was the language of the flyer which noted that the event was to “mark *the beginning of the site development process* for ‘Argyle Village,’ a village community proposed for the Kenton neighborhood” [emphasis added]. This further

heightened concerns that the KNA's voice is not actually desired at the planning table and this project would move forward with or without our support.

A KNA member was able to attend the event and discovered that a few of the pod designers were under the impression that the pods would be installed in Kenton around the first of the year. The KNA finds it troubling that we were told our involvement and support was valued but were only made aware by happenstance that the proposal process was advancing to the beginning of the site development process without us.

It is clear that The City has a strong desire to implement this pilot project at the Argyle site in Kenton, as confirmed by the presenters at our meeting who stated that no other sites were currently being considered for the pilot installment. While the lack of a more thorough site selection process might raise separate concerns, the KNA has received mostly positive feedback on the general concept of the proposal from neighbors. There are a handful of neighbors who categorically oppose the project, but The City might be able to gain their buy-in with additional engagement and clarification.

Overall, support for this project is largely tempered by the myriad of unanswered questions, and the emerging general consensus is that the neighborhood would like to work with The City to help refine the proposal to answer these questions.

The KNA appreciates the urgency of this issue and wishes to help address the emergency state of homelessness in our city, but we feel that a February installation date is too rushed to give this proposed pilot project the thoughtful attention that it and its residents deserve for it to be successful. The KNA committee that will focus on the proposed pod village will hold its first meeting next week. However, with the holiday season upon us and the potential for additional winter weather issues, we must also consider that the residents we represent would not likely be able to participate and give their input until early January at best.

As a next step in understanding and evaluating this proposal, the KNA respectfully requests that the Mayor's Office host a community information session in Kenton in January during which more concrete details on the pod village are presented by The City, ideas suggested by Kenton residents, and are discussed by all, along with allowing time to answer concerns. To do this, ample public notice must be provided to enable more residents to attend (including interested parties from other Portland neighborhoods). The KNA's pod village committee is willing to help facilitate arrangements for the event if needed. After community input is gathered, our committee plans to be available for further deliberation and discussion of the concerns raised at the event with the potential of drafting a "good neighbor contract" to clarify organizational responsibility and address said concerns. The KNA's next general meeting takes place in February, and with The City's support, we would be open to presenting the results of the pod village work at that meeting, based on the satisfactory outcome of the community information session and any contract drafting work between the KNA and proposal representatives.

Should the Mayor's Office (or another project partner) be willing to host such an event for the benefit of current and future residents of Kenton and Portland as a whole, we would like to offer the following initial suggestions of salient topics requiring further clarification:

- Methods in which project representatives will communicate directly with the KNA Pod Village Committee, sharing major ideas, deadlines, and other pertinent information in a timely manner;
- Having a contractual understanding of specifically who will be in charge and held accountable for any issues that arise during the planning process as well as during site operation;

- Concrete plans for basic sanitation (e.g. trash collection, toileting and showering facilities), cooking facilities, and the provision of security for the residents at the site; and
- Defining resident eligibility requirements and selection parameters, including clear policies on drug usage, the presence of sex offenders, and additional non-pod residents camping on or near the site, and the enforcement of these policies.

In closing, while we appreciate being brought into the conversation on this proposal in our neighborhood, we are concerned with the accelerated timeline and the oversights in communicating with the neighborhood association and our residents in key aspects of the proposal, such as site selection and in the beginning of the site development process. The KNA needs additional and more clearly defined specifics along with the opportunity to better inform and engage our neighborhood's residents in order to make a statement on this proposal. It is the desire and responsibility of the KNA to consider the needs of our neighborhood and its current residents as well as our proposed new residents and the future of this project throughout the city.

It is our hope that Mayor's Office, Catholic Charities, and the Joint Office of Homeless Services will be willing to navigate these issues together with our neighborhood association, communicate and collaborate with us transparently, and listen to and attend to our concerns authentically in a timeline that does not ignore the voices of those affected by this proposal. The KNA would be pleased to help contribute to the creation of a successful collaborative model for this type of project that could serve as an example for future work around Portland to house the homeless. We would be honored to work with both the current and future Mayor's Office in this matter.

We appreciate your time and attention to our concerns, and we look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Tyler Roppe
Chair, Kenton Neighborhood Association
On behalf of the Kenton Neighborhood Association Board of Directors

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