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Dear Mayor Potter:

My name is Dan Feiner. My wife, Nancy Stoutenburg, and I live in Old Town Lofts on the corner of NW 4th and Flanders. I am writing to express our opposition to the siting of the Resource Action Center on Block 25.

Among the reasons we oppose the project are the following:

- a. Deficient transparency in the political process that resulted in the location decision.
- b. Insufficient disclosure of the scope and size of the project.
- c. Overweighting the economic efficiencies of service concentration at the expense of the impact on the existing residents of the area.
- d. Failure to grasp or care about the consequences of the project on the economic development of the north end of Old Town.

Background

I have worked as a prosecutor and criminal defense lawyer in private practice for more than 25 years. I regularly represent substance abusers, the homeless and persons who are mentally ill or dysfunctional. Nancy is a counselor at PCC. For the past seven years she has taught classes there for women in transition. In short, we work daily with the very same people likely to be the clients of the access center.

We've lived in Portland for nearly 30 years each. Five years ago we moved to Old Town. We were attracted to its past, comfortable with its present and optimistic about its future. We envisioned it growing into a vibrant downtown neighborhood that would recognize and honor its history while still maintaining its urban character and grittiness. The arrival art galleries, the University of Oregon Architecture School, College

of Oriental Medicine, festival streets and light rail extension appeared to confirm our expectations.

While we looked forward to progress however, we also understood that people less fortunate than us, as well as the social service organizations that assist them, predated our arrival. We never lost sight of the fact that we chose to live in their neighborhood, not vice versa.

We supported the city's goal of eliminating homelessness and the social service agencies that advance it. That is why the way this project has been handled is so distressing. We never imagined you would have so little concern for us.

Lack of Transparency

Why was there little or no attempt to involve the residents of Old Town Lofts consideration of the project and its siting? Collectively we are the largest, if not the only, market rate residential development in Old Town. Our properties are the closest to and will be the most directly affected by the project. I sit on the Board of Directors of the condominium. And to the best of my recall there wasn't a single communication soliciting input or seeking our involvement in the transition center plan or siting decision. Collectively we have invested millions of dollars in Old Town. We deserved to be consulted and our opinions considered and given weight.

Scope of the Project

I have read everything I can find regarding the project and yet I still have no idea what its scope will be. Is it intended for a portion or all of Block 25? How many stories of housing are planned to go on top of the transition center? Will this be low cost housing or public housing? Will drug and alcohol treatment or correctional beds be included?

I've read that there will be up to 200 housing units. What consideration have you given to my safety, the safety of my wife and my neighbors? I have never perceived the homeless to be physical threats, but the drug dealers and other criminals who encircle them certainly are. Surely you understand that drug and alcohol abuse is prevalent among the people who will be served at the project. The police can't stop the drug dealing in Old Town as it is, what makes you think introducing hundreds of new customers to one block will make that any more feasible?

Identifying the housing as clean and sober and offering treatment is not the remedy. I know both statistically and anecdotally from my work that the vast majority of people who undertake drug and alcohol treatment fail to overcome their addictions. They relapse, leave treatment and continue to use. If greatly increased numbers of these people are to be concentrated across the street from my home I deserve to know about it now.

Economy of Scale

I understand that combining the Blanchet House and Transition Project services, a day center and housing (of whatever type intended) is more economically efficient than maintaining separate entities at different locations. But focusing on that and failing to recognize the effect on the neighboring area is short sighted, if not reckless. I don't dispute that additional services and facilities for the homeless and underprivileged are needed and beneficial. But dispersing them throughout the community will distribute the burden of providing them more broadly. There may be a greater economic cost for the facilities but what about the societal cost of concentration of so many services at one location. Hasn't history shown that low income, public housing "projects" are a failed model? Good intentions do not preclude bad results.

Affect on Economic Development

Bringing hundred of homeless, addicted and mentally impaired persons on a single block will impair livability and suffocate development in the north end of Old Town if not the entire district.

It is unreasonable to assume that the clients, patients and residents of the project will not populate the streets around the facility. Certainly there are already street people in Old Town but the consolidation of services on Block 25 will bring them all together at one location. How comfortable would you be opening a business across the street? Can you imagine why a cafe or restaurant would want to locate nearby? What will happen to the Chinese Garden? And yes, what will happen to the value of the investment I and others have made in Old Town Lofts?

Isn't the concept of Urban Renewal that community contributions will prime the pump of development, ultimately improving livability and

increasing the tax base? Do you really think that is going to happen here?

I would be interested in learning what studies are being relied upon or what models are being followed in the decision to site a project of this scope on a single block in a city the size of Portland. I have heard nothing so far that would indicate this is anything more than an unprecedented, idealistic gamble.

Much more than the millions the city is prepared to invest is at risk, however. The wager it appears you are willing to make is being made with my capital, my safety and my future as well as those of my residential and commercial neighbors. You leave the impression that you have little or no recognition or concern for that.

It is not too late for the city to reconsider its approach. If a consolidated facility must be built there is at least one other location (Block U) that could handle it without directly impacting the residential and commercial core of Old Town. What I sincerely hope you will re-evaluate, however, is the decision to place all of these facilities under one roof. Supporting and providing for the needy and less fortunate is a burden that should be distributed throughout the city, not concentrated in a limited number of neighborhoods.

Yours truly,

Dan Feiner