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May 13, 2009

TO: Chris Caruso, Land Use Services, BDS

FROM: Cathy Galbraith, Executive Director – Bosco-Milligan Foundation

RE: LU 09-101831 DZM - 3638 N Williams Avenue

It does not appear that there was any notice for the demolition permit for the buildings at the above address, despite the much-celebrated prior long-time business uses by Brooks Grocery & Meats, the House of Sound, the NAACP's offices, and the late Willie Harris's Sportsman Barber Shop and Williams Street Market. This complex was identified on our Cornerstones African American Buildings History project, given its long and continuing African American associations over time. We acknowledge that the buildings were not designated by the city for Portland for their history, despite our efforts to provide some recognition and related reviews.

The land use application proposed for this site includes requests for exceptions from setback and landscape requirements. This proposed project is massive in size and scale, and totally disregards the character of any of the buildings in the neighboring area, and the entire neighborhood.

Specifically, the request for the setback exceptions is inappropriate, given the residentially zoned properties adjacent to this property. Likewise, the request for exceptions to the parking setbacks and landscaping requirements are inappropriate. The landscaping and setbacks are necessary to provide maximum separation from adjacent properties, given the massive scale of this project. It will overwhelm the surrounding neighborhood which is low scale and residential (including the historic house and four-plex directly across NE Beech street) or small-scale commercial in nature and use. It is a full one-story too high as proposed given its location.

The fiber cement panel materials proposed for the first story are inappropriate, compared to the balance of the lap siding on the upper floors; this cement material is more appropriate, if at all, for strip-mall and other locations that are undeveloped, rather than a long-established neighborhood and street with multiple residences.

The project design appears to take no consideration of any of the qualities and character-defining features of the area into account. As proposed it will detract from the long neighborhood and public efforts to enhance neighborhood character that would continue to make Williams Avenue an attractive street on which to live and do business. It should not be approved as proposed.