

HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN LETTER TO THE EDITOR - IT'S EASY!

This prompt should get you on your way to pen a local submission regarding the **Residential Infill Project**. If you have questions or would like help with review or placement, contact Madeline at madeline@friends.org.

Key things to consider:

- 1) Prime audience = editorial board. The only people who are still swayed by letters to the editor are the most powerful team at the paper: the editorial board! You're writing to them because you want them to write more favorably for our issue or to let them know how much you agree with them.
- 2) Respond to issues, not personalities of other letter writers. Try not to refer to other people's letters, it just gets them more attention and credibility. Don't feed the trolls, just tell how this issue affects your life or your vision of what Portland should become.
- 3) Use strategic timing. If you're going to write just one letter, it should be after a high profile news article runs. Share your thoughts with the editorial board before they write their opinion. If you're going to write a second letter, write it after the editorial board opinion is released to potentially sway the editorial nature of the news direction.
- 4) If someone cites your letter, fish on! Write again. Get another letter published.

Then: Say what you want to say in about 250 words.

Your Letter to the Editor should:

- *Identify a clear problem, and it should pitch a clear solution.* (For example: Portland doesn't have enough homes that are affordable to low- and middle-income residents. We should build more middle-scale homes, encourage more creative & adaptive reuse, and incentivise programs like first-time affordable homeownership).
- *Be personal.* YOUR perspective is powerful... why does this matter to YOU?
- *Be relatable.* Why should MORE people care? Why should they agree with you?
- *Identify and inspire action.* What do you want them to be ready to do when they've read it?

You don't have to be a policy expert - keep it simple & digestible. For links to a plain English blog summary, our position (you might have your own and that's great, but hopefully ours can get you started thinking!), and more policy background & links to the city's proposal for the Residential Infill Project, visit:

www.portlandforeveryone/take-action

The **Residential Infill Project** was initiated to address three major focus areas:

- 1) Scale of houses
- 2) Housing Opportunity & incentives, and
- 3) Development on Narrow Lots/ Narrow Lot homes.

A Discussion Draft was released in October 2017. Staff are currently making changes based on public comments, changes and will publish a Recommended Draft, to be reviewed at the Planning & Sustainability Commission in May, 2018. City Council will likely vote on the proposal in November or December, 2018.

We like some things about the project a lot: It re-legalizes some small-scale “middle” housing options (like duplexes, triplexes, and two Accessory Dwelling Units) in many neighborhoods; It outlaws huge new single-dwelling homes, and disincentivizes 1:1 demolitions which replace a small house with a huge one; and it attempts to provide a bonus to encourage more affordable housing.

We think the project proposal would be much stronger if it would:

- **Allow the “housing opportunity” provisions in all areas of the city** to improve equity outcomes and encourage the creation of additional walking scale neighborhoods.
- **Make the affordable housing incentives workable** to increase likelihood they will be utilized.
- **Allow internal conversion of existing houses into multiple units in all areas**, and provide additional incentives for housing preservation.
- **Create a true cottage cluster code** to encourage the development of smaller, more affordable homes.
- **Rezone all historically narrow lots from R5 to R2.5**, with design improvements, to share land costs and provide housing options that more families can afford.

EXAMPLE: Wants more flexibility in residential areas of Portland

Editor,

In 2005, my wife and I bought an 850-square-foot house in the Woodstock neighborhood for a little over \$180,000. Because we worked for nonprofit groups, it was a stretch for us, but we made it work. Today, we’re raising our two children in that home. We have great neighbors. We can walk, bike, or bus to school, the park, work, and the store in no time. Zillow says our home is now worth almost \$400,000. I could not afford to buy my own house today. In fact, only a small and shrinking pool of affluent people could buy my home – or most of the homes in our neighborhood.

This worries me. Woodstock is a great neighborhood in large part because, in the past, people of modest means could comfortably rent or own a home, and have quick, low-cost access to shopping, work, education and play. Those features, I fear, are disappearing. The result is that renters and potential homeowners alike are getting priced out of the neighborhood, and often the entire city.

That includes people that everyone depends on to make Portland work – teachers, home care providers, electricians, small business owners, social workers, the list goes on. This includes people of color who have already endured decades of discriminatory housing policies. This potentially includes my own kids – and potentially yours. I don’t want Portland to become a playground for simply the wealthy. It is time for city leaders to allow a greater diversity of homes in Portland. More duplexes and triplexes. More flexibility to convert large homes into multiple units. More tiny houses and granny flats and clustered communities. More incentives to builders who permanently set aside some of their units for low-income families. And while we’re at it, let’s put limits on huge McMansions. Diverse housing types used to be the norm. Take a walk through Ladd’s Addition, Irvington, and Laurelhurst, and other neighborhoods that were built before 1960. This is important to me as a homeowner, because it shows we can have more abundant, affordable housing that is consistent with the existing neighborhood.

More letter examples are available at www.portlandforeveryone.org/resources-for-advocates