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Correspondence from Nohad A. Toulan to Neil Goldschmidt

Nohad Toulan

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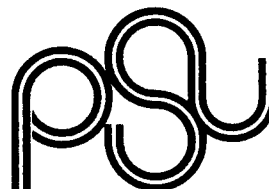
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August 22, 1972

Commissioner Neil Goldschmidt
City Hall
1220 S.W. Fifth
Portland, Oregon

AUG 24 1972

COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Dear Neil:

It is indeed a great pleasure to have met you and it is certainly reassuring to hear you discuss your views and plans for the City of Portland. There is no doubt in my mind that the city is about to witness a new era in which mature and conscientious government is fully responsive to the real needs of the people. I shall not underestimate the challenge, but I am sure that, given the strong will, it is not insurmountable.

During our meeting you asked me to review the Plan for the Portland Downtown. I have read it carefully, and I am certainly impressed by the number and diversity of goals and objectives it spells out. After reading it twice, however, I find myself still confused as to what the plan really intends to achieve. A plan is usually understood as a course of action. In other words, it states the goals, reviews the present, outlines the required changes and finally examines the tools and means required to achieve the stated objectives. In the Plan for the Downtown the only area which is treated in that manner is transportation. As a result, aside of the fact that this plan is an elaborate statement of goals, it strikes me as being mostly transport oriented. In general, I have some personal observations on the report and I shall attempt to summarize them in the following:

1. I am rather disappointed with the housing section. Housing, especially low income, is not a simple proposition. I was expecting, therefore, a more comprehensive treatment of this section than what the report provides. Housing for low income families can not be discussed in isolation from other community services. As a result, I am surprised to note that there is very little reference to the type of supporting activities that will make this type of housing feasible in the Downtown Area. Indeed the report does not specify what type of low income families will be housed in the downtown. But it is not unreasonable to expect a considerable number of these families to have school age children. I find no reference to schools or other community services that will be demanded by low income families. As a result and because of the general way in which housing is treated, I can not help but suspect that it must have ranked low on the list

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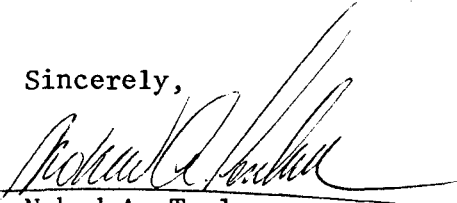
2. As a plan for the downtown, I find it rather weak in the area of urban design. There is very little reference to the type of downtown we should have. I mean this in terms of the third dimension. I am certainly disappointed to see that the allowable heights as discussed on page 50 are certain to destroy the significant vistas that all of us would like to preserve. Unless the sketches are inaccurate, I do not believe we will have any vistas remaining if the allowable skylines are ultimately achieved.

3. Although I am not sure but I sense that the amount of space allocated for office building is rather excessive. I doubt that Portland can eventually support all this office space. I think we need to examine in greater depth the national trends in this regard before any final commitment is made. Major cities from New York to Honolulu are already suffering from an over supply of office space. In many cases this tended to adversely affect the entire real estate industry. In others it simply led to the unnecessary withholding of land that could have been better utilized for other badly needed uses.

These are the three main deficiencies I see in the Plan. I should not, however, sound too negative in my review. As I mentioned, it is a good statement of goals and to some extent I find myself in general agreement with many of these goals. I am especially pleased that the plan recognizes housing for low income families as a legitimate downtown use, but I still would have liked to see something more than just a brief statement of objectives.

Should you have any further questions, I shall be glad to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,



Nohad A. Toulan
Professor of Urban Studies

NT/cns