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Remarks from Ernie Bonner

Ernest Bonner

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5/21/96

REMARKS OF ERNIE BONNER AT CITY COUNCIL HEARING ON PARKING GARAGE

LUR 96-00074 PR (Park Avenue Plaza)

I thought Park Avenue Plaza was a strange name for a parking garage until I came across the term 'Preservation Parking.' This is surely one of the great spin terms of modern day land use regulation. Originally, the term meant parking in support of the older and historic buildings in Portland. Over recent months the definition was first changed to mean all buildings built before 1962; then finally loosened to include all buildings in the downtown which have less parking on site than the maximum allowed under the Zoning Code (0.7 spaces per 1,000 square feet of building area). Now the Parking Manager's list of buildings eligible for 'Preservation Parking' includes every building in downtown Portland. Can that possibly be what City Council intended? I wonder. How did the original purpose of supporting our older and historic buildings get so badly amended? I don't know.

If you must have such a provision, forget the term 'preservation parking'. Call it what it is--long-term parking for office buildings, handed out on a first come, first served basis.

As to the matter at hand: We are considering here today what would be the tallest parking structure in downtown Portland. (See attached chart). This garage will completely fill its proposed space. It will swallow up 500 cars during the morning rush hour and disgorge them in the afternoon rush. It is difficult for me to understand how this proposal will not ". . . lessen the overall desired character of the area."

The Hearings Officer makes it clear how the proposal meets the letter of the code; coming to the conclusion that the ". . . desired character of the area . . ." will not be compromised by such a garage. But your interpretation need not be the same. What do you think should be the desired character of that area?

The applicant and the Hearings Officer maintain that the Zoning Code is your vision for that area. Is that true? Do you really look forward to the development of a phalanx of buildings, all about 10 stories high, all with their building lines right at the property line, all with the same design guidelines as the rest of downtown? I know that some of you do not.

I think that area could be a very special place in the city. Its character would draw from, and be dictated by its location at the junction of two important elements in the downtown--the Park Blocks and the Retail Core. Elements of

both park and retail use would co-exist through sensitive use of building setbacks, *arcades* and pedestrian cover. It could be a 'destination' in the City, a place people know about and want to visit. It could help anchor the west end of the retail core. In fact, we could call it the West End. (See attached drawings *for one possibility along those lines*).

Let's table this proposal (like the City Council did with the Meier and Frank parking garage a little over 26 years ago) and re-think our plans for that area (and for downtown parking as well). A year from now let's have a hearing that looks at more than this proposed building; that envisions the area as a whole, and sets forth a plan (and funds) for realizing that vision. Twenty-five years from now the citizens of Portland will be glad you did.

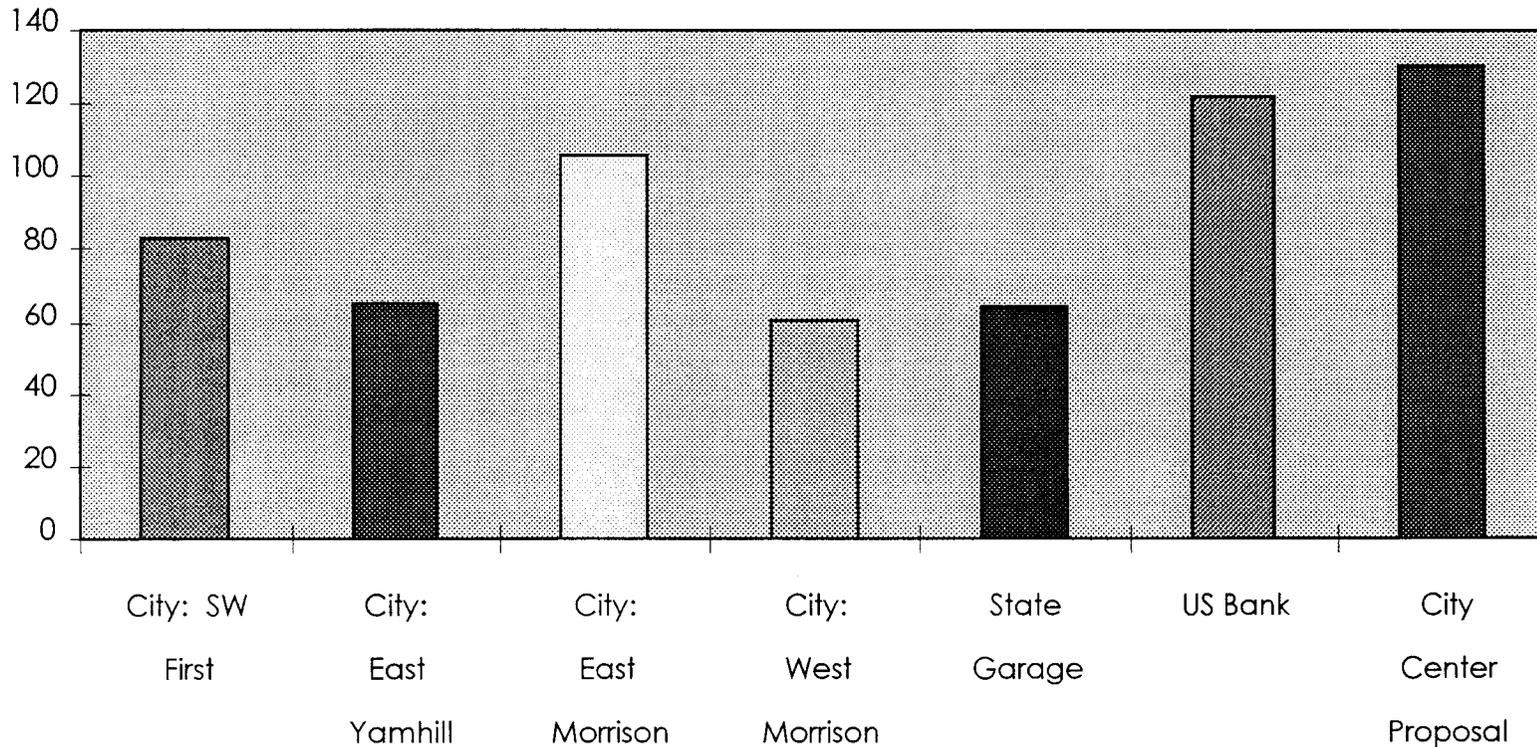
~~Ernie Bonner~~

Ernie Bonner

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Height of Downtown Parking Garages



Note:

1. The permit allowing the construction of the US Bank garage stipulated that the top two floors could be built but not occupied.
2. Two floors have been added to the City's West Morrison garage since these heights were recorded. And the proposed two floors to be added to the State Garage have also not been included in these data. In both cases the resulting new height will unlikely be greater than 25 feet more than that recorded above.