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October 17, 2016

RE: Morrison Park Rezone

Dear Chair De Vol and Planning Commissioners:

As a land-use advocacy group, this rezoning application is complicated for us because it pits two important land use goals against each other. The Hood River Valley Residents Committee (HRVRC) champions the creation of more affordable and higher density housing units. At the same time, we believe the City of Hood River needs additional park space. “Housing” and “Parks” shouldn’t be an either/or. Good cities do both simultaneously. In Portland, the city is pushing hard for affordable housing, but at the same time they have an aggressive initiative to create new parks. Portland sees that these goals go together. They are creating new parks in the very neighborhoods where affordable housing and densification are taking place. Hood River’s calling card has been the quality of life it offers residents. This means creating complete neighborhoods where residents thrive because they have access to housing *and* to public spaces that encourage a healthy, active, socially connected lifestyles.

The Morrison property provides a unique opportunity for Hood River to follow the example of other cities and mix higher-density housing and park space. The City already has examples on paper of how this might work on the property. In 2008, the City of Hood River commissioned a team of University of Oregon Architecture graduate students to draw up concept plans for the Morrison parcel (*their plans are attached here*). Their project brief was that half of the property should be used for affordable housing and half for public park/open space. The student projects show 60-111 housing units while retaining 2.4 acres of park space. The plans are compelling.

HRVRC believe this mixed-use model represents a creative and effective use of the property for maximum public benefit. The University of Oregon students put the park space at the southeast corner of the site because their research showed that is difficult to develop because of an existing stream and lithic outcrops that make grading expensive. From a neighborhood design perspective, this same southeast corner is the most desirable location for public space and the things that make housing development difficult—the stream, lithic soil and mature oak trees—are attributes in a park setting.

We see synergy in the idea of Housing + Park. The City desperately needs to add to the inventory of housing units that are affordable for low-income households. This property has many attributes that make it a great location: it is near transportation corridors, next to Columbia Area Transit and within walking distance to shopping. The property is also a great location for a public park. The City’s Housing Needs Analysis shows that 30 acres of additional park space is needed in the next 20 years but the City does not have a plan in place as to how this acreage goal can possibly be met. This rezone would remove 5 acres from

inventory, adding to the City's parks' deficit. The Wasco Street neighborhood is zoned and built for high density residential and needs a multi-use neighborhood park that can serve a wide demographic. The skateboard park is a special use park that benefits a narrow user group; it is not a substitute for a neighborhood park with amenities serving a diverse range of ages and physical abilities. And of course, the new residents of the affordable housing development would be among the biggest beneficiaries of a new park on the property.

Therefore, **HRVRC supports the rezone of the Morrison property** to R-3 for the purposes of creating affordable housing with the provision that **the rezone be conditioned to require one half of the property be reserved for a future public park** and that future development of the property include a requirement for the public path which connects to the Hook as envisioned in the City's Transportation System Plan. We encourage the City to work with Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District to develop a park with the right mix of amenities to serve this growing and changing neighborhood.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Staten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Staten
Executive Director