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April 14, 2017

Mayor Ted Wheeler and Members of Portland City Council
Portland City Hall
1221 SW Fourth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Subject: Portland Art Museum Rothko Pavilion street vacation amendment Ordinance No 127882

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners:

On April 20, 2017, City Council will be considering amendments to Ordinance No 127882 (1968), which concerns the vacation of SW Madison Street between SW 10th Avenue and SW Park Avenue. This area is between the Portland Art Museum's Main and Mark buildings and has been redeveloped into a courtyard (sculpture garden) and 8-foot wide pedestrian connection. The museum courtyard is one of the great outdoor urban spaces in the city and links the Park Blocks to a well-used streetcar stop. It is also the proposed location of the new Rothko Pavilion, which will be a significant and beneficial addition to the museum and the city.

The proposed amendment to the terms of the street vacation would allow the 8-foot wide pedestrian way to be enclosed within the new Rothko Pavilion. It would continue to allow the museum to close the connection between certain hours for security. It may add new restrictions that limit use to the connection to pedestrian only use excluding bikes and pets. Our understanding is that the museum would like to have certainty about these changes early in the process to design the new pavilion.

The Planning and Sustainability Commission has not had the opportunity to be briefed about or to discuss the proposed amendments. While the PSC has a role in establishing street vacations, it does not have a formal role in the process to amend the conditions of vacations already granted by City Council. However, in the past, the Commission has offered recommendations to City Council on this vacation because of the importance of this space to the urban design and connectivity objectives in the Central City Plan.

The Commission will hold a briefing with the opportunity for the public to comment to develop an informed recommendation on April 25. We request that City Council hold the record open so the PSC can share our recommendations before the Council votes.



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If this is not possible, the PSC would like to emphasize to City Council that public access across this location is very important. The design of whatever replaces the current open connection is critical for this connection to be successfully replaced. We should not start the design of a replacement with the assumption that reducing the connection from full access to pedestrian-only is acceptable other than as a last resort.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,



Katherine Schultz
Chair

