

**For the official public record of the Code Change “Committee 3.96” project.**

TO: Code 3.96 Committee and project staff  
DATE: July 18, 2019  
FROM: Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association (MTNA)

RE: draft code change vote

As a core stakeholder in the change initiated by this project, and as a group of people who care deeply about participating in government, the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association **respectfully requests the Committee delay their vote on the draft code change.**

Every resident of the city has a Neighborhood Association they can call their own. Unlike any other group, you don't have to identify with a particular religion, or ethnicity, or party, or social movement to be welcomed into the practice of engaging with government when you do so through a Neighborhood Association. Our meetings are open, our discussions and votes are transparent, and we cannot gain favor with City Council (or their appointed staff) with contributions to campaigns. Which are a few reasons official, codified recognition is so important. Citizens who engage through us are accountable, and elected officials must recognize the community when it organizes through a Neighborhood Association even though there is no financial incentive for an elected to do so.

Today, many Neighborhood Associations find their most engaged volunteers to be middle class and white. Many Portland institutions suffer from this same imbalance. But our doors are open, and even if our volunteers have been too strapped to spend enough time on outreach, those same volunteers work on many projects that benefit all Portlanders. We protect public parks from being sold to developers, we improve pedestrian safety for kids walking to school, we fight to slow speeds on neighborhood streets, we rehabilitate old drug houses, we work for cleaner air, we scrub graffiti, and we staff hundreds of volunteer efforts all over the city.

The right to participate in a Neighborhood Association is automatic, and offers an equal voice to all. The existing NA structure within City Code enshrines this critical value. Don't eliminate official, codified recognition for the one type of organization that welcomes everyone, that can't buy influence and recognition, and that is bound by transparency laws. That wouldn't align with the Auditor's 2016 recommendations that serve as the genesis for your work on this code update (<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditservices/article/597834> ).

Sincerely,  
The Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association