

Council Communication

December 2, 2014, Business Meeting

Discussion of Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group Recommendations

FROM:

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SUMMARY

The City Council formed a working group comprised of three City Councilors and two Planning Commissioners to review the proposed Normal Neighborhood Plan. Having completed their review the working group is providing their recommendations for amendments to the neighborhood plan for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The draft plan for the Normal Avenue Neighborhood area is intended to establish an integrated land use and transportation framework for the future annexation and development of a 94 acre residential area within Ashland's Urban Growth Boundary. At the time a property owner requests annexation into the City of Ashland, an adopted neighborhood plan is intended to help guide changes to the area in a manner that accommodates a diversity of households; creates a system of greenways; protects and integrates existing stream corridors and natural wetlands into future residential developments; and enhances overall mobility by arranging for safe and convenient driving, walking, and biking routes.

Following the Planning Commission forwarding their recommendation on the neighborhood plan, the City Council held public hearings on the draft Normal Neighborhood Plan on [May 6, 2014](#), [May 20th, 2014](#), and continued public testimony and deliberations to a special meeting on [May 29, 2014](#). At the final meeting the Council directed the establishment of an ad-hoc working group to examine the fundamental assumptions that were used in developing the plan, as well as conduct a more in depth review of a number of plan elements. The appointed working group included two Planning Commissioners (Richard Kaplan, Michael Dawkins); two City Councilors (Pam Marsh, Mike Morris), and Mayor Stromberg.

The Council directed the working group to specifically examine the following:

Housing Concentrations and Type

- Regional Problem Solving (RPS) assumptions on density
- The need for NN zoning; Density (units per acre)
- Building height limitations (2.5 or 3-story)

Transportation

- General transportation and connectivity issues; Transportation to the schools; East-west transportation issues; Public transportation; Traffic reduction (elimination); Improvements to East Main St.; Railroad crossing



Open space

- Wetland protection & delineations.
- 25% open space

Infrastructure

- water, sewer, and electric; developer driven costs

Public Input

- Incorporate public input and respond accordingly

Over the course of nine public meetings, held between June 2014 and November 20, 2014, the working group explored each of the specific items identified by Council. A series of meetings specifically focused on housing and land use, open space and natural resources, transportation and infrastructure, and included an exercise where working group members aimed to conceptualize an alternative neighborhood plan independent of the original draft proposal. Additionally a special round table meeting was held (September 18, 2014) where a panel was brought together to provide feedback on what they liked and disliked about the draft plan, identified barriers to agreement, and explored how the plan could be amended to work from their perspective. Panelists included a selected neighborhood representative from within the Normal Neighborhood Plan area (Susan DeMarinis), a representative from the adjacent development's Home Owners Associations (Bryce Anderson), a developer who represented a number of property owners (Randy Jones), and two outside experts familiar with land use and housing development (Alan Harper and Tom Giordano) who each had an opportunity to present their concerns and suggestions and have an open discussion about the draft plan.

In consideration of public input provided, and a review of the draft plan's elements, the working group discussed a general vision for the neighborhood and formulated a summary list of recommended plan amendments. The working group has articulated its recommendations in the attached memo presented for Council's consideration.

The Planning Commission also forwarded recommended amendments to the Draft Normal Neighborhood Plan to the City Council ([Planning Commission Report dated 4/22/2014](#)). The Normal working group reviewed each of those recommendations in developing its final recommendations. The working group's recommended amendments alter the land use classifications, allowable housing densities, and internal transportation network thus differing from the plan the Planning Commission originally reviewed and had based the Commission report upon. The working group did concur with the Planning Commission's recommendation that the conservation/open space boundaries are a neighborhood defining characteristic and should remain as presented in the original draft plan. The working group recommends that the existing maximum building height of 35 ft. or two and one-half stories should be retained and to not allow an increase to 40 ft. or three-stories through a conditional use permit process as was recommended by the Planning Commission. The working group has requested that the Planning Commission be updated on the working groups review to provide the full Commission with an opportunity to comment on the recommendations prior to Council's formal public hearings for adoption of a plan.

COUNCIL GOALS SUPPORTED:

The development of a neighborhood plan including a land use framework, open space framework, transportation framework, and land use ordinance amendments in support of sustainable development practices addresses the City Council's Strategic Planning Goals and Objective below:

13. Develop and support land use and transportation policies to achieve sustainable development.



- 13.1 Create incentives and ordinances for energy-efficient buildings.
- 13.2 Develop infill and compact urban form policies.
- 13.3 Support alternative transportation choices.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Adoption of the ordinances amending the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation System Plan to implement the Normal Neighborhood Plan does not have a direct fiscal impact on the City. However, external transportation improvements associated with the future build-out of the neighborhood, including the railroad crossing and improvements to East Main St, may necessitate that the City have a role in the financing and or implementation of these projects. Accordingly, the working group recommends that the City Council direct city staff, and/or an outside consultant, to quantify the overall costs of these off-site infrastructure improvements, and examine potential financing methods.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUESTED ACTION:

Staff recommends the Council direct staff to amend the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework, and implementing ordinances which were originally presented to Council on May 6th, to incorporate Council recommended changes, and schedule the final neighborhood plan to come back to Council for formal consideration at a public hearing on February 3, 2015.

SUGGESTED MOTIONS:

I move to direct Staff to amend the Normal Neighborhood Plan implementing ordinances to incorporate the selected recommendations of the Normal Neighborhood Working Group as discussed by Council, present the updated plan to the Planning Commission and Parks Department for comment, and schedule First Reading for February 3, 2015.

I move to direct Staff to conduct an analysis of the necessary improvements to East Main Street and the Normal Avenue Railroad crossing to identify and quantify the need and possible means for public investment, and assess the overall costs and benefits that these facilities present to the entire City.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Working Group Memo dated 12/02/2014 (Attachment 1)
- [Working Group recommended land use map](#) (Attachment 2)
- Wetland, Floodplain and Riparian Maps (Attachment 3)
 - [Normal Plan Wetlands Map \(map 1\) dated 10/9/2014](#)
 - [Normal Plan Riparian/Floodplain Map \(map 2\) dated 10/9/2014](#)
 - [Normal Plan Water Resources Exclusion Areas \(per recent delineations\) \(map 3\) dated 10/9/2014](#)
- Working Group meeting minutes (Attachment 4)
 - [Minutes from 10/23/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 10/09/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 9/18/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 9/04/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 8/21/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 7/24/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 7/10/2014](#)
 - [Minutes from 6/19/2014](#)
- Public Letters and submittals presented to the Working Group (Attachment 5)



- [Jones \(Mahar Homes\) Letter dated 11/20/2014](#)
 - [Vidmar Letter dated 11/15/2014](#)
 - [ACCESS Inc. Letter dated 11/12/2014](#)
 - [Vidmar Letter dated 10/27/2014](#)
 - [Miller Letter dated 9/29/2014](#)
 - [Mahar Homes Concept Plan dated 9/18/2014](#)
 - [DeMarinis testimony dated 9/18/2014](#)
 - [Lutz Letter dated 9/17/2014](#)
 - [Miller Letter dated 9/12/2014](#)
 - [Miller Letter dated 9/03/2014](#)
 - [Boyer Letter dated 8/20/2014](#)
 - [DeMarinis Letter dated 8/06/2014](#)
 - [Vidmar Letter dated 07/30/2014](#)
 - [Breon Letter dated 7/22/2014](#)
 - [DeMarinis Letter dated 7/22/2014](#)
 - [Vidmar Letter dated 7/21/2014](#)
 - [DeMarinis Letter dated 7/15/2014](#)
- The full meeting archive of the Normal Neighborhood Plan from May 2012 to the present day is available online at: www.ashland.or.us/normalplan

