

Memo

DATE: 06/25/2013
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner
RE: Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan Update

Background

On April 9th, 2013 the Planning Commission held a study session to continue their review of draft street networks and land use designations for the Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan. The Commission and public discussed numerous aspects of the plan including potential alternatives addressing the following:

- Location alternatives for high density housing in consideration of lowering the density adjacent to established neighborhoods.
- Transitional standards to correlate density, height, and coverage of new developments with existing established neighborhoods.
- Distribution of density throughout the plan area with variation in the types of housing units provided within a block.
- Identification of bike and pedestrian routes through the plan area and how they connect to the larger City network
- Identification of potential public pathways along open space corridors including future connections to the Bear Greek Greenway and Ashland Middle School.
- Stormwater management standards and preservation of the plan area hydrology.
- Traffic generation and impacts

Following the April 9th study session staff has worked with the design team at UrbWorks, Parametrix Inc. and Qamar Architecture to refine the concept plan in consideration of the sites unique characteristics, input provided by area residents, property owners, and comments provided by the Planning Commission. Attached to this memo are a series of plan maps that illustrate potential revisions to the street, bicycle, and pedestrian networks as well as a map depicting a zoning alternative which redistributes the housing density within the plan area.

The revised street network as presented includes a new street designation called a “Woonerf”. “Woonerf” is a Dutch term translated as “living street” which functions as shared public space for pedestrians, cyclists and for intermittent slow-moving, cautiously driven, automobiles. Limited parking opportunities may also be considered in the design of a Woonerf. The revised street network envisions such shared spaces along the riparian corridors to serve primarily as pedestrian and bicycle circulation, while maintaining an opportunity for limited local resident car circulation and fire apparatus access and



staging areas. The introduction of Woonerfs into the potential street classifications for the plan area helps address a number of objectives that were raised in prior meetings. The primacy of pedestrians and cyclists in the design of a Woonerf helps establish public pathways along the riparian corridors and wetland features. Woonerfs are typically designed to have significantly less pavement than streets by providing a narrow 12ft wide driving surface meandering within a 20ft wide right of way. This allows for greater storm water retention and the slowing of surface water runoff which is a valuable design consideration in the immediate proximity of sensitive riparian and wetland areas.

The revised Land Use Designation (Zoning) Map includes a number of changes from the version presented on April 9th which were made in consideration of concerns raised regarding the compatibility of future development with established neighborhoods:

- The NA-03 (multi-dwelling high density residential) Zone previously has been modified north of Creek Drive and west of Clay Street to be zoned NA-02 (Multi-dwelling low-density) extending 100 feet back from each street.
- The original concept for the NA-03 zone was to allow 3 stories up to 45 ft. in height, which has since been reduced to 2.5 stories up to 35 feet tall. This revised height is consistent with the current maximum height standard for all residential zones within the City.
- In the North West corner of the plan area a number of properties which were previously designated as NA-01 (single dwelling residential) have been modified to include a mix of NA-02 and NA-03. This alteration, upon development or redevelopment of the area, would effectively distribute more of the units within the plan area to be adjacent to East Main Street and in immediate proximity to Ashland Middle School.
- The NA-02 zone would allow for a variety of housing types including single dwelling units, townhouses, and cluster (cottage) housing.

The City of Ashland has hired the traffic engineering firm, SCJ Alliance, to conduct a future traffic analysis to quantify the potential trip generation and impacts to the City's transportation facilities resulting from a full build-out of the plan area. The findings from this analysis will help address capacity questions raised at the previous study session as well as to help determine if alternate design scenarios need to be explored or plan adjustments made.

During this study session City staff, and a representative from the design team, will provide an overview of the map revisions and the draft code language for consideration and discussion. Input provided at tonight's meeting, as well as the findings of a Future Traffic Analysis, will be used to inform further refinements to the plan, which will conclude the consultant funded work.

Remaining tasks within an amended scope of work to be completed by the consultant team include:

- Final Draft Land Use Code (Ch 18) and Site Design and Use Standards
- Final Draft Street and mobility network
- Final Draft Land Use Designation Map
- One illustrative plan view of the neighborhood plan area
- Final Draft Plan document.

Following completion of the consultant team's work under the scope of the TGM grant the City will provide an update to the City Council and Planning Commission to discuss potential revisions to the consultant provided documents to ultimately develop the final plan and code revisions for review and consideration through a formal public hearing process.



Project Guiding Principles and Objectives

The Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan is intended to guide future changes to the area in a way that supports a compact neighborhood form, and which will ultimately accommodate a variety of housing, connect a system of greenways, protect and integrate existing creek corridors and wetlands, and enhance mobility for area residents through establishing safe and direct walking and bicycle routes, as well as help to build a foundation that supports future bus service in the area. Upon completion of this project, the Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan will provide a coordinated approach for future area development which will address the following objectives:

- Increase efficiency in the use of land through concentration of housing in a centrally located area within the City UGB planned for future urban development;
- Achieve a development pattern that results in a balanced, multi-modal transportation system and that enhances opportunities for walking, bicycling or using transit in areas planned for transit service;
- Delineate housing, neighborhood serving commercial, open space, public space, and green infrastructure improvements, in a manner that provides for preservation and enhancement of creeks and wetlands;
- Develop new illustrative conceptual architectural and site plans for Project Area consistent with Transportation and Growth Management objectives. Concepts will meet City's and the property owners' development goals and standards.
- Design a local street grid for the Project Area including connections to existing and planned street, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities outside Project Area, to more fully integrate the Project Area into the City transportation system;
- Provide for pedestrian and bicycle routes and facility improvements within the Project Area that will provide safe access to local schools;
- Provide alternatives to, or delay the need for, expansion of the City UGB;
- Reduce emissions that contribute to climate change through changes to transportation or land use plans that reduce expected automobile vehicle miles traveled;
- Provide an implementation strategy that includes supporting Comprehensive Plan and updated TSP amendments, form based codes, and design standards; and
- Present the Plan and documentation necessary to support adoption to City's Planning Commission (PC) and City Council (Council).

Attached:

- Plan Maps Revisions
 - Project Extent
 - Wetlands and Streams
 - Street Network 1
 - Street Network 2
 - Pedestrian Network
 - Bicycle Network
 - Zones
- Draft Chapter 18 Code Amendments
- Forms of Detached and Attached Dwellings (Density Images)
- New York Times article : *Where 'Share the Road' Is Taken Literally*
- Letters
 - Grace Point Church of the Nazarene - dated June 12, 2013
 - Jan Vidmar – dated April 26, 2013
- Planning Commission Minutes 4/9/2013

