

# Memo

## Planning Commission 02/25/2014

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TO: Ashland Planning Commission

FROM: Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner  
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RE: Normal Neighborhood Final Plan

### Summary

At this study session staff will present the final materials for the Normal Neighborhood Plan. These materials include the key elements for adoption of the neighborhood plan and regulating future development within the 94 acre north Normal Avenue area. The neighborhood planning project has been undertaken as a tool and process in part to address the City's desire to address future infill and growth through innovative land use strategies.

Upon final adoption the neighborhood plan and implementing ordinances are intended to provide a detailed vision and regulatory framework for the area which efficiently accommodates future growth, provides for a system of greenways, protects and integrates existing stream corridors and natural wetlands, provides for a variety of housing types, and enhances overall mobility by planning for safe walking, bicycle, and automobile routes while providing convenient access to future bus service. Neighborhood planning represents an opportunity to collectively think ahead, determine a vision, and instill a degree of confidence about being prepared for changes, rather than merely being put in a position to react to change.

The materials presented at this study session will again be presented back to the Planning Commission and public for consideration at a formal hearing. These final plan materials incorporate revisions to the draft plan presented to the Commission on 11/26/2013 and include the following major components:

- Normal Neighborhood Plan document  
(dated February 2014)
- Normal Neighborhood Plan Maps
- Draft Land Use Code Amendments
  - Normal Neighborhood District  
(ch.18-3.13)

The attached Normal Neighborhood Plan document is intended to summarize the area's existing conditions and to provide an overview of key opportunities and constraints identified and considered over the course of the two year planning process. Given the narrative format of this document it will

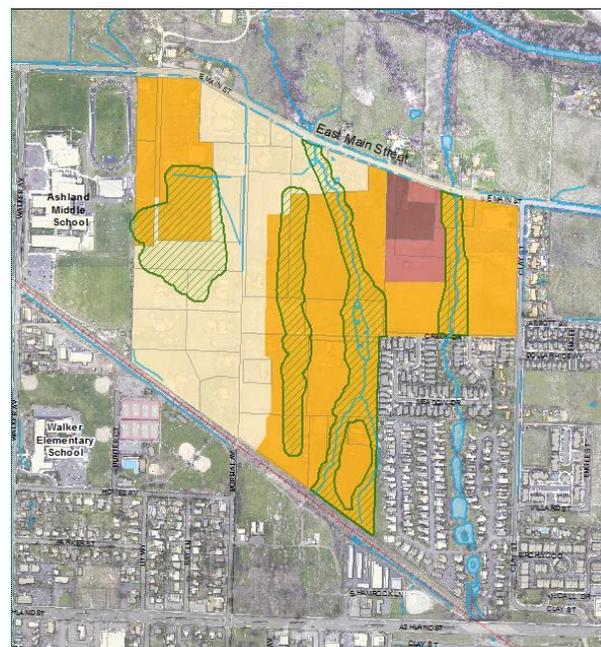


assist future residents and developers understand the context of the neighborhood plan and the general intention behind the implementing ordinances and maps. It is important to note that this document is not itself a regulatory tool and does not establish approval standards. Rather the draft Land Use Ordinance, the Neighborhood Plan maps, the Transportation System Plan, and the adopted street standards will establish the regulatory framework for future development of the area.

## Land Use Framework

During the Planning Commission study sessions held on October 8<sup>th</sup> and November 26<sup>th</sup> commissioners discussed how future applicants may respond to changing natural conditions such as an increase or decrease in a wetland's area. Commissioners also discussed how the plan would accommodate the transfer of the residential density out of environmentally sensitive lands to the project's developable land area. In the final plan and proposed land use ordinance these issues have been addressed as follows:

- Proving a underlying land use designation (NN-01, NN-02, NN-03, or NN-03C) to all lands within the plan area
- Establishing a conservation area overlay that includes wetlands as included in the adopted Local Wetlands Inventory, 50ft wetland buffers, the FEMA 100yr floodplain, Ashland's floodplain, and riparian protection areas.
  - The establishment of a "Conservation Area" is consistent with the City's existing Comprehensive Plan Map, although as proposed these areas would be expanded to include the above noted water resource protection zones.
- Establishing a Major and Minor Amendment process in the Land Use Code relating to changes in the location or area of conservation areas.
  - It would be considered a major amendment to eliminate, or reduce in area, a designated conservation area.
  - It would be a minor amendment to change the boundaries or relocate a conservation area (IE to correspond with a future wetland delineation) provided there is no reduction in the area preserved.



**Normal Neighborhood Plan  
Land Use Designation Overlay Zones**

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|---|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #fff9c4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> NN-01 | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #d9534f; border: 1px solid black;"></span> NN-03-C   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffc107; border: 1px solid black;"></span> NN-02 | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, #90ee90 2px, #90ee90 4px); border: 1px solid black;"></span> Openspace/Conservation Areas |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #d9534f; border: 1px solid black;"></span> NN-03 |   |

- The method of residential density transfer, to concentrate development upon areas outside of Water Resource Protection Zones (WRPZ), is already provided for in Ashland’s Land Use Ordinance. The existing regulations state:

*18.63.100D Density Transfer. Density calculated from the land area contained within the Water Resource Protection Zone may be transferred to lands outside the Water Resource Protection Zone provided the following standards are met.*

  - 1. Partitions and subdivisions involving density transfer shall be processed under the Performance Standards Options Chapter 18.88.*
  - 2. A map shall be submitted showing the land area not within the Water Resource Protection Zone to which the density will be transferred.*
  - 3. The Water Resource Protection Zone shall be included in a separate preservation tract to be managed by a homeowner’s association or other common ownership entity responsible for management of the area.*
  - 4. Density may only be transferred within the subject property or to a lot or lots contiguous to the subject property and within the same ownership.*
  - 5. The density transferred to lands not within the Water Resource Protection Zone may not be increased to more than one and a half times the base density of the underlying zoning district. Fractional units are to be rounded down to the nearest whole number.*
- Amending the ordinance to clarify that designated conservation areas may be excluded from the acreage of the project for the purposes of calculating the minimum density for residential annexations (18-3.13.050B1b).
  - Staff has recommended this ordinance language in consideration of those individual properties with a significant area of land within a conservation area. The concern was that with an annexation requirement to accommodate 90% of the base density for the whole site upon the developable land area, some properties would be compelled concentrate a disproportionate, or unfeasible, number of housing units upon a limited amount of developable land area, thereby exceeding the carrying capacity of the land and /or triggering a housing type and effective density not otherwise allowed in the zone. As drafted a development could still transfer density out of the WRPZ (see above) where feasible and appropriate, but they would not be obligated to do so to comply with the 90% minimum density requirement.
- Providing storm water management requirements that including that future peak storm water flows and volumes not exceed pre-development peak flow.
  - The City Engineer may require the applicant to submit hydrology and hydraulic calculations to determine pre- and post development storm water flows to evaluate the effectiveness of storm water management strategies.

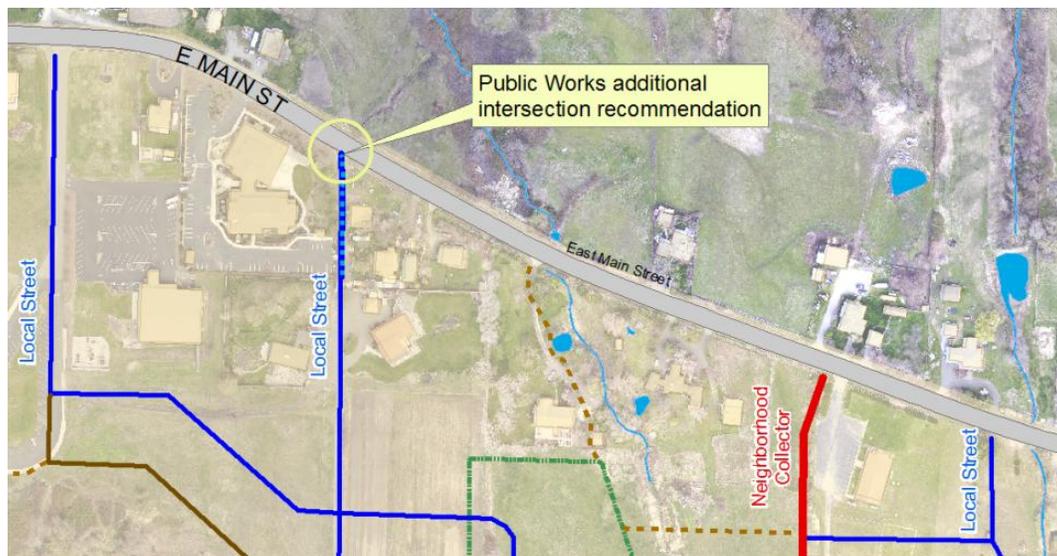
### **Transportation Framework**

The Transportation Commission discussed the plan’s transportation framework and the issue of the new neighborhood collector at a special meeting held on November 14, 2013. Commissioners questioned whether “New Normal Avenue” should be more receptive to non-neighborhood traffic and configured as a straight North/South connection to better accommodate cut-through traffic as is presently portrayed in the Transportation System Plan (TSP) . The Transportation Commission ultimately recommended that the New Normal Avenue be the sole vehicular connection to East Main Street, thereby recommending elimination of two of the three intersections as proposed in the draft



plan. The Transportation Commission also discussed the issue of needed facility improvements to East Main Street (i.e. curb, gutter, bike lanes, sidewalks) and voiced concern over the cost and timing of such improvements. East Main Street is presently improved to County standards and ultimately needs to be upgraded to meet the City's Avenue standard.

In reviewing the final Street Network included as an attachment to this memo the City's Public Works Director, Mike Faught, has expressed that a fourth intersection is needed to accommodate traffic to and through the development, provide two means of access to East Main Street west of Cemetery Creek, and to maintain a gridded street system. Director Faught presented this position to the Transportation Commission as a formal recommendation that would be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration. If approved by the City Council this additional intersection would be an extension of the local street as shown below.



A [Future Traffic Analysis](#) was conducted as part of this project that specifically analyzed traffic impacts projected at full build-out of the area. The report found that all existing intersections in vicinity of the project are expected to continue to function within operational standards in the year 2038 and that that each of the proposed new street intersections with East Main Street would function within applicable mobility standards.

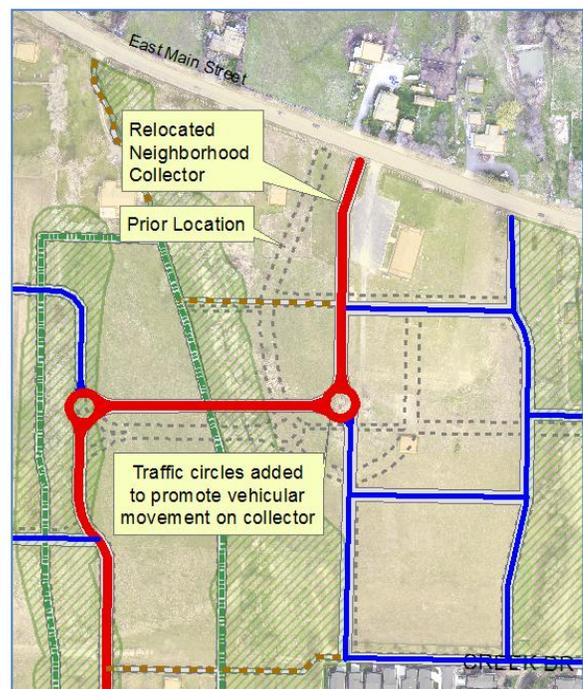
The report noted that East Main Street should be improved to comply with existing City standards (bike lanes, park rows, sidewalk, and potentially a center turn lane) at which point the improved Avenue could accommodate projected vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic. Further the report found that the City should consider conducting a speed study and pursuing a reduction in speeds on East Main St. to be 25mph at the time of future improvements.

Future improvements to East Main Street, the railroad crossing, and the new neighborhood collector would each be of benefit to bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobile users beyond the plan area boundaries and as such the Public Works Department is looking to include each of these infrastructure improvements on a list System Development Charges eligible transportation.

The “Shared Streets” as proposed within the plan area are to be very low speed streets where all of the functions of the transportation system coexist in the same space. There are no individual sidewalks separated from the street surface by curbs and planted medians. There are no bicycle lanes separated from the street by painted lines. The low volumes, low-speeds, and narrow cross-section make it possible for all to safely occupy the street surface by yielding to the slowest and most vulnerable present at a given moment. As part of the final plan materials presented at a public hearing a Transportation System Plan amendment will be included for consideration to establish the street standards and cross section for this street type.

## Street Alignment

On September 24<sup>th</sup> the Planning Commission suggested that the final plan locate streets and zoning along property lines where practical. In the vicinity of the neighborhood collector intersection with East Main Street the proposed street has been shifted to the east in the final plan to better align with the property line between two large parcels. The addition of small traffic circles, or a street geometry design which provides for smooth turning movements on the neighborhood collector, will allow traffic to flow continuously without hard turns thereby addressing a concern raised by the Transportation Commission. Further this re-alignment will utilize the collector street to efficiently serve each adjacent property and allow them to develop independent of one-another. To correspond with this change in road location the proposed zoning of the affected properties has also been similarly adjusted to correlate with existing property lines and future street locations.



## Land Use Ordinance

The proposed Land Use ordinance amendments will work in consort with the Normal Neighborhood Plan, multi-modal transportation circulation plans, and newly proposed zoning designations to provide the underlying framework for future area development. The Normal Neighborhood District ordinance amendments are ultimately to be incorporated into the Unified Land Use Ordinance (ULUO) as a distinct overlay.

The Draft Normal Neighborhood District ordinance references sections within the ULUO and as the ULUO is in the process of being amended the final adoption of the Normal Neighborhood District ordinance will need to either be processed concurrent with draft ULUO review and hearing process, or following its adoption. However to assist the public and the Commission in evaluating the regulatory standards proposed for the neighborhood plan the Draft Normal Neighborhood District ordinance (ch.18-3.13) is included for review and consideration at this time.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Normal Neighborhood Plan, plan maps, and TSP amendments, are to come before the Planning Commission and public at a formal public hearing scheduled for March 11, 2014. The Normal Neighborhood District Land Use Ordinance will be presented to the Planning Commission as part of the ULUO hearing process. The Commission's recommendations on the final plan will be provided to the City Council for their consideration during the final adoption public hearings yet to be scheduled. Given timing issues related to the concurrent Unified Land Use Ordinance update process, the formal adoption process for the Normal Plan must be undertaken in two phases:

#### Phase 1 (3/11/14):

- Adoption of official maps:
  - Comprehensive Plan designation for the “Normal Neighborhood Plan” with Conservation Areas identified.
  - Land Use Designations Map (NN-01, NN-02, NN-03, NN-03C)
  - Street Network Map
  - Pedestrian and Bicycle Network
  - Street network: Green Streets
  - Open Space Network
- Adoption of Transportation System Plan (TSP) amendments including:
  - Amend the Street Dedication Map (TSP Figure 10-1) to incorporate the plan area Street Network, and reclassify Normal “Avenue” as a Neighborhood Collector.
  - Amend the Planned Intersection and Roadway Improvement Map (TSP Figure 10-3) to include East Main Street as a Planned Roadway Project
  - Amend the Planned Bikeway Network Map to incorporate the planned multiuse trails within the Normal Neighborhood Plan.
  - Amend the Street Standards to incorporate Shared Streets.

#### Phase 2 (date tbd) :

- Adoption of the Normal Neighborhood District Land Use Ordinance (draft Chapter 18-3.13) into the Unified Land Use Ordinance.



**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Normal Neighborhood Plan Maps (dated 2/25/2014)
  - Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment
  - Land Use Designation Overlay Zones
  - Street Network Map
  - Pedestrian and Bicycle Network
  - Street network: Green Streets
  - Open Space Network
- Normal Neighborhood District Draft Code Amendments (Chapter 18-3.13)
- Normal Neighborhood Plan Document (dated February 2014)
- Summary of Plan Revisions

