

Planning Commission Report

DATE: April 22, 2014
TO: Ashland City Council
FROM: Ashland Planning Commission
RE: PA#20130-1858 Normal Neighborhood Plan
Planning Commission Recommendations

Summary

The Ashland Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 11, 2014 related to the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan Map, Transportation System Plan, and Ashland Land Use Ordinance amendments proposed to implement the Normal Neighborhood Plan (Planning Action 2013-01858). The Commission concluded their review on April 8th and following discussion and deliberation unanimously recommended the City Council approve of the Normal Neighborhood Plan with a number of specific recommendations as outlined in this report.

The Normal Neighborhood Plan area is one of the last sizeable tracts of largely undeveloped land designated for residential purposes in Ashland's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). The future development of this area is expected to contribute toward accommodating long range population growth consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, and Ashland's position in the Greater Bear Creek Valley Regional Problem Solving Plan (RPS). The Planning Commission recognizes in order to *maintain a compact urban form* and to *ensure the orderly and sequential development of land* (Comprehensive Plan Goal 12.09) that neighborhood planning is an appropriate tool for this area. The creation of a neighborhood plan in this area is particularly valuable as over three decades of development has occurred in the area, under county standards, since the original Comprehensive Plan land use designations were assigned to the area. Consideration of the area's existing pattern of development, presence of water resource protection areas, existing and projected traffic volumes, and public testimony has allowed the Planning Commission to better understand the development constraints within the plan area, and carefully address the coordinated provision of open space, transportation, infrastructure, and housing.

Recommendations

The Planning Commission identified two categories of recommended amendments, those changes that are minor editorial corrections, and those changes that have broader policy implications. Amendments that are editorial in nature and necessary to clarify terminology and provide inter-document consistency are to be included in the final documents presented to the City Council. A list of these editorial changes is attached to this report (Appendix A). The Commission's recommendations pertaining to allowable land use standards, the stated purpose of open space, and the extent and timing of transportation system improvements are addressed in this report as specific recommendations for Council's consideration.

Comprehensive Plan Change and Land Use Designations

The Planning Commission supports the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments and Land Use Designation Overlay Zones as proposed, and recommends the following:

- Approval of the proposed amendment to the Ashland Comprehensive Plan Map to create a designation for the Normal Neighborhood Plan District, including revised boundaries for Conservation Areas within the plan area.
- Adoption of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Land Use Designations Overlay Zone Map.
- Adoption of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document as a supporting document to the City’s Comprehensive Plan, with recommended changes to the mobility and open space chapters as described below.

Mobility (Transportation) Framework

The Planning Commission supports the Street Network, Pedestrian and Bicycle Network, Green Street Network, Shared Street Standard, and Street Classifications as proposed, and recommends approval of amendments to the the City Transportation System Plan (TSP) and City Street Standards to incorporate these elements of the Normal Neighborhood Plan as follows:

- Amend to the Street Dedication Map (TSP Figure 10-1) to incorporate the plan area’s proposed Street Network, and reclassification of Normal “Avenue” to be 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 (TSP Figure 8-1) to incorporate the planned multi-use trails within the Normal Neighborhood Plan.
- Amend the Street Design Standards within the Street Standards Handbook to incorporate the Shared Street classification.

The Planning Commission has specific recommendations relating to the timing of transportation improvements associated with the future development of the plan area. In order to address current and future transportation along to East Main Street, the Commission recommends the mobility chapter of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework Document be amended to reflect the following:

- The south side of East Main Street, from Walker Avenue to Clay Street, should be fully improved to City Street Standards prior to, or coinciding with any future annexation and development within the plan area.
- A future transit stop coordinated with the Rogue Valley Transportation District, in the immediate vicinity of the NN-03 Land Use Zone, should be incorporated into the East Main Street roadway design and development.
- That prior to annexation and development within the plan area the following items relating to the future Railroad crossing at Normal Avenue be addressed:
 - That the proposed public Rail Road crossing can be installed without necessitating the closure of any existing public crossing within the City.
 - A financing plan be developed and approved by the City for the future improvement of the rail road crossing.

Open Space Framework

The Planning Commission supports the Comprehensive Plan map amendment to establish designated Conservation Ares as proposed, which include the Cemetery Creek and Clay Creek 100 year Floodplains, Wetlands identified in the 2007 Local Wetland Inventory, and wetland and riparian buffer



areas consistent with the Water Resource Protection Zones. The Planning Commission further supports the Open Space Network map as presented and recommends approval of these plan elements.

The Planning Commission has determined that the provision of open space within the plan area has environmental, recreational, and aesthetic value to the neighborhood. The contiguous open space corridors are a neighborhood defining characteristic and as such the Planning Commission recommends the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework Document's Greenway and Open Space chapter be amended to further emphasize the community value of open space retention with a concluding statement on page 14 as follows:

The Normal Neighborhood's distinctive character is shaped by the presence of prominent open spaces and natural areas. The preservation of these neighborhood defining features is central to the success of the neighborhood plan as they ensure the protection of fragile ecosystems, provide passive recreational opportunities where people can connect with nature, protect scenic views considered important to the community, protect future development from flood hazards, and preserve community character and quality of life by buffering areas of development from one another. The permanent establishment of interconnected open spaces and contiguous conservation areas as proposed in the Open Space Framework is essential to promote and maintain high quality residential development which is appropriate to the distinct character of the neighborhood.

Land Use Ordinance

The proposed Normal Neighborhood District Land Use Ordinance will be reviewed as part of a separate legislative process as it is to be incorporated into the Unified Land Use Ordinance (ULUO) process presently underway. However, given the interrelated nature of the Normal Neighborhood Plan elements the Planning Commission took testimony regarding the draft Normal Neighborhood District Land Use Ordinance at March 11th public hearing in order to evaluate the draft ordinance and formulate recommendations for the Council's consideration. The Planning Commission supports the draft land use ordinance's mix of land uses, housing types and proposed densities, Site Development and Design Standards, and flexibility afforded by the proposed major and minor amendment provisions, with following recommended policy change:

- The Commission recommends the dimensional regulations in the proposed land use ordinance (18-3.13.050) and the review procedures be amended to include a Conditional Use Permit to increase building height from the proposed 35ft and 2½ story maximum up to 40ft and 3-stories exclusively within the NN-03 and NN-03C zones. The Commission finds that such a change would provide applicants greater site and building design flexibility in achieving the stated densities (15 units per acre) within the NN-03 and NN-03-C zones, while retaining a publically noticed review process to evaluate the bulk and scale of proposed buildings to ensure neighborhood compatibility is preserved.

Conclusion

Through the two year public neighborhood planning process the Planning Commission has evaluated the impacts of future development in consideration the of goal to ensure a variety of dwelling types and provide housing opportunities for the total cross section of Ashland's population, consistent with preserving the character and appearance of the City (Comprehensive Plan goal 6.10). The resulting



neighborhood plan strives to preserve the character of the neighborhood, accommodate a variety of housing types, 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. The Planning Commission finds the Normal Neighborhood Plan, with the additional recommendations included in this report, achieves these objectives and will be a valuable guide for future annexation and development of properties within the 94 acre area.



Appendix A

Editorial Changes incorporated into the final plan documents

The editorial changes recommended by the Planning Commission and Staff were needed to clarify terminology and provide inter-document consistency. These changes have already been incorporated into the draft documents presented to the City Council for consideration. The following lists the specific changes that were made to the plan documents presented at the first public hearing on March 11, 2014:

- Amend the framework document (page 7) under Double Dwellings to strike NN-01 as a zone where they are permitted.
- Amend the Framework Document to alter references to Pedestrian Oriented Cluster Housing (e.g top of page 7) to be consistent with the description of the Housing Type as written on page 8.
- Amend the Framework Document to eliminate statements that stipulate that rear alleys “help to eliminate pavement” as although true in some site configurations it is not universally true in all circumstances (pg 16).
- Amend the Framework Document’s “Use Table” on page 10 to include Pedestrian Oriented Cluster Housing as permitted in NN-02 and NN-03 consistent with the draft Land Use Ordinance.
- Amend the draft Land Use Code 18-3.13.040 as follows:
 - A2: The use regulations and development standards are intended to create, maintain and promote single-dwelling neighborhood character. A variety of housing types are allowed including multiple compact attached and/or detached dwellings. Dwellings may be grouped around common open space promoting a scale and character compatible with single family homes. Development standards that are largely the same as those for single dwellings ensure that the overall image and character of the single-dwelling neighborhood is maintained.
 - B5: Pedestrian Oriented Cluster residential Units are multiple dwellings grouped around common open space that promote a scale and character compatible with single family homes. Units are typically arranged around a central common green under communal ownership. Auto Parking is generally grouped in a shared surface area or areas.
 - B7: Add a place holder for a Cottage Housing description consistent with the Unified Land Use Ordinance.
- Amend the draft Land Use Code 18-3.13.050 to read as follows:
 - B1(e). Accessory residential units shall be included for the purposes of meeting minimum density calculation requirements for residential annexations as described in 18-5.7.050F.
 - B2(b): Cottage Housing. In the NN-01 zone, developments meeting the standards of section 18-2.3.090 Cottage housing shall receive a density bonus consistent with 18-x.xx.xxx *.(to reference the density bonus put forth in the ULUO)*
- Amend the draft Land Use Code 18-3-13.060 to read as follows:
 - A3(a): Automobile Access to development is intended to be provided by alleys where possible consistent with the street connectivity approval standards.

