

**CITY OF
ASHLAND**
ASHLAND PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
July 28, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Melanie Mindlin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Civic Center Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street.

Commissioners Present:

Michael Dawkins
Melanie Mindlin
Haywood Norton
Roger Pearce
Lynn Thompson

Staff Present:

Bill Molnar, Community Development Director
Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner
April Lucas, Administrative Supervisor

Absent Members:

Troy J. Brown, Jr.

Council Liaison:

Greg Lemhouse, absent

Other:

Debbie Miller was unable to participate because she lives within the project boundary.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & AD HOC COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Development Director Bill Molnar noted the city commissioner thank you event scheduled for Sunday, August 30, 2015 at Oak Knoll Golf Course. He stated the City Council passed first reading of the Verde Village development agreement modifications and explained the City has requested an extension on their planning action at 380 Clay Street to explore options that would keep the tree and also allow for some development.

PUBLIC FORUM

No one came forward to speak.

TYPE III LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING

A. PLANNING ACTION: PL-2013-01858

APPLICANT: City of Ashland

LOCATION: Normal Neighborhood District Boundary

REQUEST: To amend the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan Map, Transportation System Plan, and Ashland Land Use Ordinance to implement the Normal Neighborhood Plan.

Staff Report

Community Development Director reviewed the history of this action. He explained 14 months ago the Planning Commission forwarded a recommendation to the City Council on the adoption of a Normal Neighborhood Plan. The Council held three meetings on the issue and formed a working group to fine tune some of the details. The working group held 12 meetings and have formulated a list of plan amendments for consideration. Mr. Molnar stated there is still some confusion in the community about the plan and emphasized that this is not a request for development. He stated in the City's 1980 Comprehensive Plan this area was indentified to accommodate 500+ units, and the City's Transportation Plan from the same time showed a future north, south, east, and west connection through the area. He stated the plan presented before the commission tonight is a detailed plan that reflects the City's current standards and will be used as a guide for future development as individual property owners approach the City for annexation.

Senior Planner Brandon Goldman provided overview of the three proposed ordinances. Ordinance #1 amends the City's Comprehensive Plan to include a new land use designation for the Normal Neighborhood, adds the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework as a supporting document, and adopts the Normal Plan open space map. Ordinance #2 amends the Transportation System Plan (TSP) street dedication map, planned intersection and roadway map, planned bikeway network map, and amends the street design standards of the land use ordinance to incorporate the new shared street classification. And Ordinance #3 amends the municipal code to add a new Normal Neighborhood Special District chapter for the 94 acre area, revises existing code sections to reference the proposed Normal Neighborhood (NM) zoning classifications, and amends the neighborhood district zoning classification map. Mr. Goldman clarified that even with adoption of this plan, none of the zoning for this area changes. It is still under Jackson County's jurisdiction and property owners can still develop under county standards if they choose to do so. These standards would only come into play when an annexation into the City is proposed by the property owner.

Mr. Goldman reviewed the working group's recommendations, listed in their December 2, 2014 memo to the City Council, which include:

- Relocate the higher density zone to the south, nearest the rail road tracks, which would put it in closer proximity to the commercial core on Ashland St. as well as the Ashland bike path.
- Maintain the option for neighborhood serving commercial.
- Apply consistent zoning designations within the plan area with the zoning of adjacent land within the city limits and use zoning labels that are comparable to those used in the rest of the city while recognizing the Normal Neighborhood (NM) district. Mr. Goldman explained the proposed densities within the plan area are as follows: NN-1-5 = 4.5 units per acre, NN-1-3.5 = 7.2 units per acre, NN-1-3.5-C – 7.2 units per acre plus mixed use, and NN-2 = 13.5 units per acre. He also provided plan comparisons by potential number of dwellings and stated under the Comprehensive Plan 536 potential units could be built, the previous draft of the Normal Neighborhood Plan allowed for 546 potential units, and the current plan would allow for 450 potential units.
- Maintain the approach towards open space (approximately 25% of the total plan area) and allow non-conservation open space to be relocated or reduced through a minor amendment process. Reductions would require Department of State Lands concurrence that the area is not in a designated wetland through an approved delineation. Mr. Goldman clarified that while some wetlands may be reduced in size, much of those areas are still contained within designated floodplains or water resource protection zones and could not be reduced through an amendment process and would have to be preserved as open space.
- Incorporate three vehicular connections with East Main St. and maintain the Normal Collector as designated in the draft plan, align internal streets in a grid pattern with clear east west connections, and provide pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a means to connect residents with the middle school and the existing bike path.
- Add East Main St. to the TSP Street Dedication Map. Mr. Goldman stated the working group agreed that the railroad crossing improvements and improvements to East Main St. are integral and should proceed in concert with development, and asked the City to consider the formation of an advance financing district or other possible means for public investment into the needed improvements.

Questions of Staff

Mr. Goldman answered questions from the commissioners. He clarified: changing a neighborhood collector to a local street designation would be a major amendment; that East Main St. is under Jackson County's jurisdiction and the City would have to enter into agreement with them to change it to a city street; and that the traffic analysis did not show that a traffic light at East Main was warranted. He also provided examples of how the transfer of density provision might be used.

Public Testimony

Bryce Anderson/2092 Creek Dr/Submitted a letter into the record that expressed the concerns of the Meadowbrook Park Estates, Ashland Meadows, Chautauqua Trace, and East Village homeowners' associations. Mr. Anderson asked for a center turn lane on East Main St, for the entire length of East Main St. from Walker to Clay to be improved concurrently with the approval of any development in the plan area, for the bike lane and sidewalk on East Main to be separated from vehicular traffic, and for commercial development to require a conditional use permit.

David Hoffman/345 Scenic Dr/Asked the commission to consider climate change and Ashland's limited water resources when making this decision to add 500 more units to the city.

Sabra Hoffman/345 Scenic Dr/Stated she has been impacted by the loss of TID water to her property and asked the commission consider Ashland's water supply during their discussions on the proposed plan.

Sue DeMarinis/145 Normal Ave/Stated one of the wetlands has been damaged by the property owner and questioned what would happen to the connective corridors between the wetlands if applicants are able to do a minor amendment. Ms. DeMarinis remarked that the building lands inventory shows the city has enough stock to accommodate growth and questioned why the city would consider adding another 500 units. She also stated the East Main St. improvements should happen all at once and that it does not make sense to do these one section at a time.

Joseph Kauth/1 Corral Ln, #13/Expressed concern with housing developments taking over the natural setting, as well as how the added houses and roads would negatively impact rising temperatures.

Julie Matthews/2090 Creek Dr/Stated a property owner in the plan area has altered the flow of water across his parcel. She stated this is very unstable land to build on and stated her home is eroding underneath due to the water flows. She expressed concern with the plan's impact on wildlife and stated if you build streets next to these corridors the animals will not use them anymore.

Carol Block/355 Normal Ave/Stated of the 94 acres is the plan area, 30 acres are owned by people who have no intention of annexing. She questioned if this area would be better suited for food production and questioned the impact additional housing would have on the city's water supply and waste water systems. She stated the full improvement for East Main St. needs to happen and questioned how much of these costs would be passed onto the taxpayers. She stated according to the buildable lands inventory this plan is not necessary.

Deliberations and Decision

Commissioner Mindlin asked the group to list the areas they wished to discuss. Density and the impact of bonuses/transfers, when and how East Main St. will get improved and how it will be funded, conservation easements and the minor amendment process, the collector road, and cluster housing were identified for discussion.

Density & Density Bonuses

Commissioner Dawkins commented that the proposed plan is a template of what could happen in the future and stated if the city does not adopt a plan they will have no control of what happens to this area. He added there are a lot of positive things that would happen with the city's conservation standards that would not occur if the land is developed under county standards. Commissioner Pearce stated when talking about density they need to start with the comprehensive plan. He stated change will be hard for people but the decision to develop this area was made a long time ago when the comprehensive plan was adopted and approved by the state. Commissioner Thompson concurred that they are constrained by a set of expectations that have already been enacted, but added she would like to see the open space areas remain even if they are not wetlands. Comment was made that there are still two big swatches of open space through the plan area that will remain even the wetlands shrink. Staff was asked to comment on the claim raised during public testimony regarding this land not being needed according to the buildable lands inventory. Mr. Goldman responded that at the initiation of this project in 2011 the city conducted a buildable lands inventory and found that there was a 24-year supply in the city limits and the urban growth boundary. He clarified this finding included the Normal Plan area with the potential number of dwellings allowed under the existing comprehensive plan zoning designations.

Mr. Goldman briefly explained the density bonus provisions for the commission. The first provision sets a minimum density standard and states that sensitive areas do not need to be counted towards the developable area. The second provision is the maximum residential bonus permitted and establishes the maximum density allowed.

Open Space

Commissioner Mindlin stated one of the goals of the plan is to maintain the neighborhood character, provide a connection with nature, and protect the viewsheds, and she is having a hard time with the working group's recommendation to allow

open space to be removed through a minor amendment process. Mr. Goldman provided some discussion background from the working group. He stated two property owners within the plan area paid to have their wetlands delineated and it was found that the wetlands were not nearly as big as originally thought. He stated concerns were raised by those wanting to develop that the coupling of the open space requirement, affordable housing requirement, and the infrastructure costs would make it unfeasible to develop the property. The working group was not willing to consider changes to the affordable housing requirements but felt the open space component could be considered for changes. Mr. Molnar added that the major amendment provision included in the draft plan was more restrictive than the rest of the city. Commissioner Dawkins stated the working group wanted to get past whether a specific area was or was not a wetland since they tend to change and instead focused on the two distinct corridors as a starting point and wanted these to stay open space, and pursuant with the water resources ordinance no development can occur in these two corridors. Commissioner Pearce commented that if the desire is to maintain more open space, the city will likely need take more responsibility for the infrastructure costs. Suggestion was made to consider establishing criteria for this amendment provision. Mr. Goldman noted that under the minor amendment process the applicant must still show that the change furthers the purpose of the plan. He stated the greenway and open space statements are included page 13 of the framework. Comment was made that having this language embedded in the code would be clearer and make a stronger statement of the intent.

Commissioners Thompson/Pearce motion to continue meeting past 9:30 p.m. Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.

Commissioner Mindlin stated she does not expect the commission to complete this action this evening. Commissioner Thompson agreed and stated she is reluctant to propose a motion without thinking through all the implications. Mindlin recommended the commission focus their remaining time on areas where staff might be asked to bring back additional information.

Cluster Housing

Commissioner Mindlin stated she wants to make sure cluster housing is a success and is pleased it is included in this plan. She asked if it could be extended to the NN-1.5 zoning designation and noted it is currently only listed as permissible in NN-1-3.5 and NN-2. Staff indicated they do not believe there is any impediment to extending cluster housing to the NN-1.5 zone and were asked to prepare draft code language for consideration.

Alleys/Lanes

Commissioner Mindlin stated the framework document still states that the use of alleys/lanes reduces paved surfaces and stated the commission had previously agreed to remove this statement.

Transfer of framework language into the standards

Commissioner Mindlin voiced her support for the language on page 10 of the framework document and questioned if this should be included in the development standards. Mr. Goldman clarified this was included in the framework and omitted from the standards by design. He stated it is intended to provide developers with a summary of components that would address the council goals and is meant to provide developers with a list of possibilities instead of a strict set of standards. Mr. Molnar added the framework is a guiding document that will be used by the city council at the time of an annexation and applicants will need to show how their request meets city goals.

Street Designations

Commissioner Norton suggested staff look at whether Normal Avenue should be classified a local street instead of a collector. Commissioner Pearce suggested the current shared street language may constrict them too much.

Fencing

Commissioner Mindlin suggested staff look into whether the framework document should include language that states open spaces shall not be screened from view.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Submitted by, April Lucas, Administrative Supervisor