

Memo

Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group

04/15/2015

TO: Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group

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

Summary

The Normal Neighborhood Plan materials provided include key elements, as recommended by the City Council, Normal Working Group, and Planning Commission, for adoption of the neighborhood plan and to regulate 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.

The materials presented at this working group meeting will be presented to the Planning Commission and public for consideration at a formal hearing on April 28th, 2015 and include the following major components:

- Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document (dated March 2015)
- Normal Neighborhood Plan Maps
- Draft Land Use Code Amendments
 - Normal Neighborhood District (ch.18-3.4)

The Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document, plan maps, and code amendments presented incorporate the revisions as were recommended by the working group and as directed by the City Council on December 2, 2014.



Background

The City Council held a public hearing 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.

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 focused on a general vision for the area, housing and land use, open space and natural resources, transportation and infrastructure. In consideration of public input provided at these meetings, and their review of the draft plan's elements, the working group formulated a summary list of recommended plan amendments. The working group articulated their recommendations in a memo (attached) presented to the City Council for consideration on December 2, 2014.

The Normal working group reviewed each of the Planning Commission's recommendations in developing their 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.

At the December 2nd, 2014 City Council meeting at which the working groups recommendations were reviewed, the Council directed Staff to revise the Normal Neighborhood Plan to incorporate their recommendations and to present the updated plan to the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission and Parks Department for comment.

The Planning Commission held a study session on March 28th to review the plan changes, and expressed concern over the viability of higher density development in immediate proximity to Cemetery Creek at the southern portion of the project area. Specifically as an "island" of land with a proposed zone of NN-02 is surrounded by designated floodplain's it was questioned whether the intensity of development proposed in that location was advisable. The Commission further discussed road improvements to East Main Street and reiterated that improvements to meet City street standards are necessary to accommodate the development of the area.



Land Use Framework

In the final plan, and proposed land use ordinance, the recommendations of the working group have been incorporated which include the following:

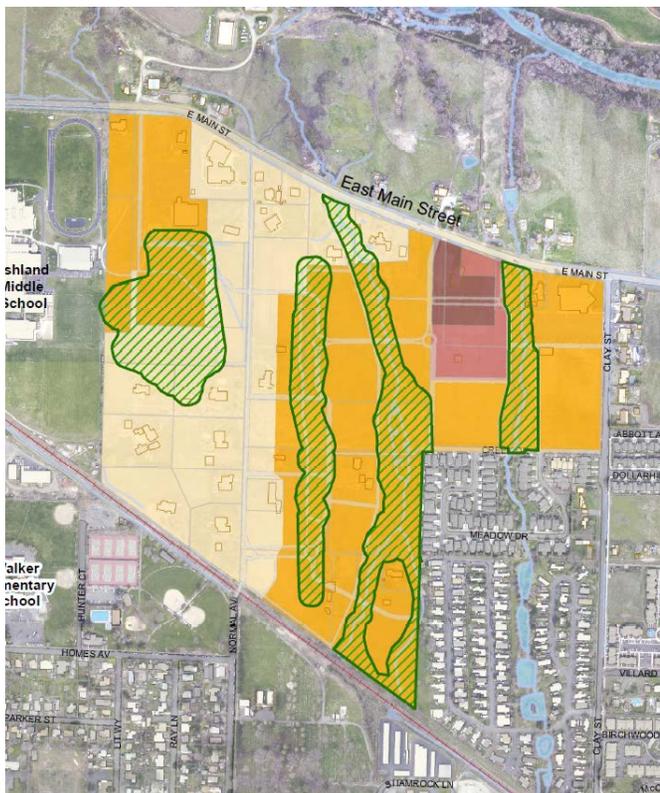
- Changing the originally proposed land zoning designations to be more consistent with the zoning of adjacent land within the City Limits
- Using zoning labels and housing densities that are comparable to those used in the rest of the city while recognizing the Normal Neighborhood (NN) district
- Maintain the option for neighborhood serving businesses and services close to East Main St near the northeast corner of the plan area (NN-1-3.5-C).
- Locating higher density development near the railroad tracks and within a relatively short distance to transit lines, parks and community facilities.
- Locating lower density development along East Main Street to protect the existing viewshed and maintain a gradual transition between rural and urban areas.

Previous Land Use Designations (4/2014)

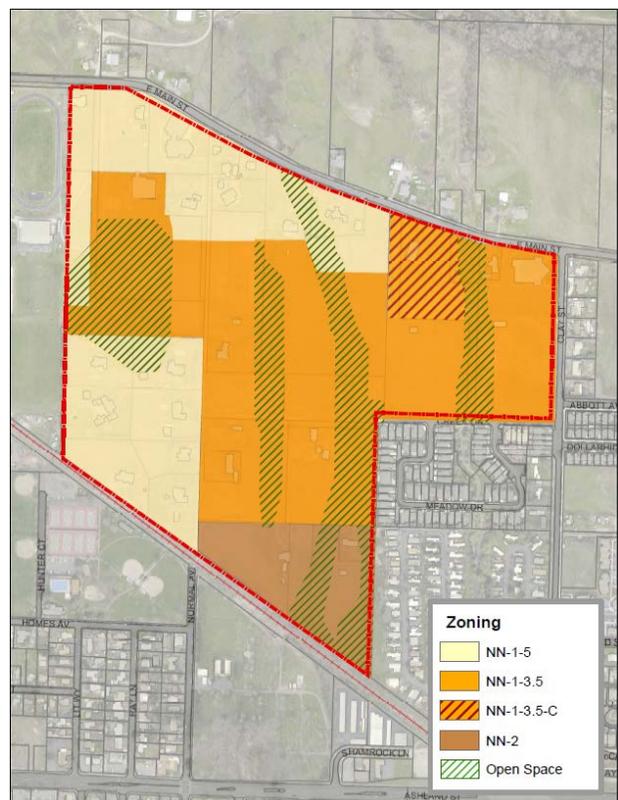
Zone	Density
NN-01	5 units per acre
NN-02	10 units per acre
NN-03	15 units per acre
NN-03C	15 units per acre + mixed-use

Revised Land Use Designations (3/2015)

Zone	Density
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 + mixed-use
NN-2	13.5 units per acre



Previously Proposed Land Use Designations (4/2014)



Revised Land Use Designations (3/2015)

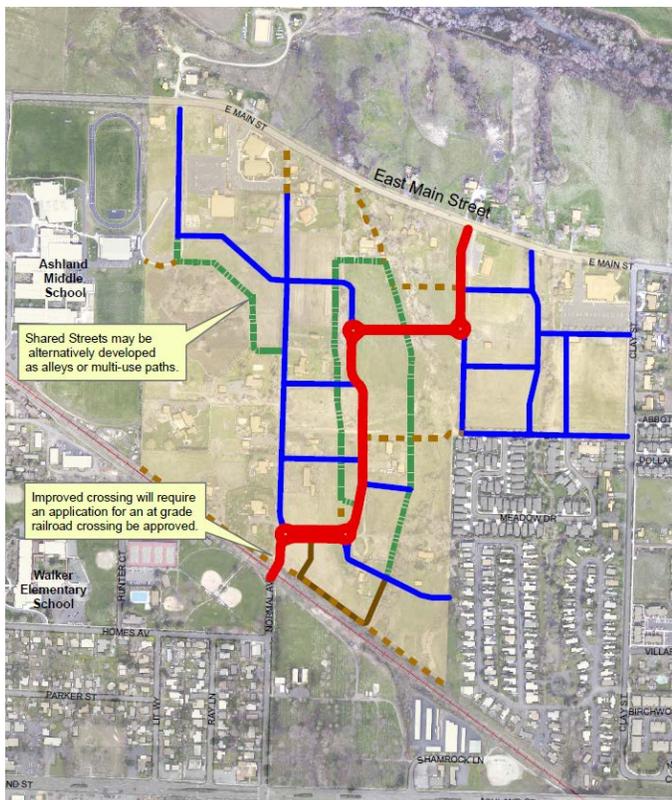


Transportation Framework

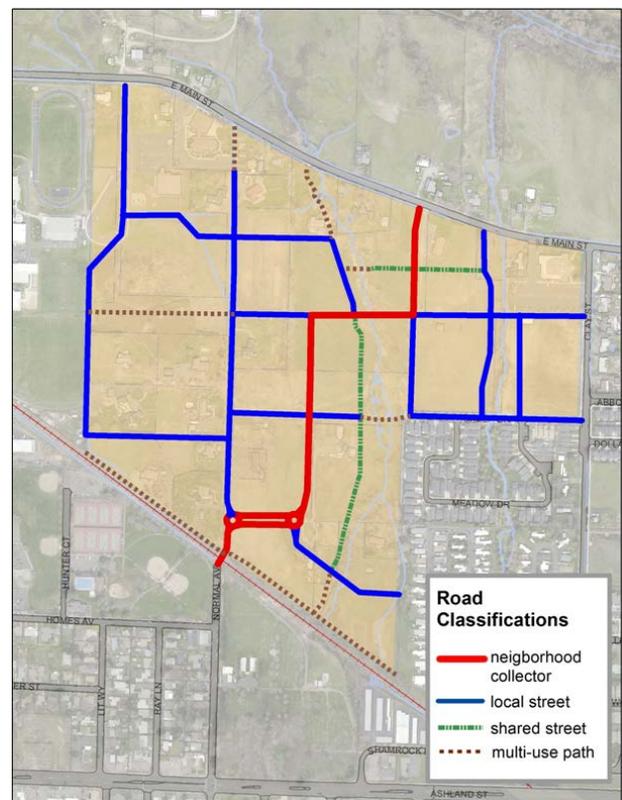
The Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group had a number of specific recommendations relating to the future transportation system which have been incorporated into the neighborhood plan as follows:

- The internal transportation system’s local street network should incorporate multiple connections with East Main Street as shown, and maintain the Normal Collector as designated in the draft plan. Additional connections to East Main Street or Clay Street, which are not shown in the proposed Street Framework, should require a major amendment to the Plan.
- Internal local streets should be aligned to provide a more standardized grid pattern, including clear east-west connections.
- Pedestrian and bicycle pathways are critical, especially as a means to connect residents with the middle school and the existing bike path.
- External transportation improvements, including the railroad crossing and improvements to East Main Street are integral and should proceed in concert with development.

Additionally the Council directed staff to conduct an analysis of external infrastructure improvements associated with the plan area’s development specifically regarding the future public rail crossing and East Main Street improvements. The Public Works Department and Hardy Engineering have completed a general cost analysis for improvements to public rail crossing and East Main Street and further evaluated the role of private and public financing. Their assessment is included as an attachment to this memo.



Previously proposed Transportation Network (4/2014)



Revised Transportation Network (3/2015)



Openspace

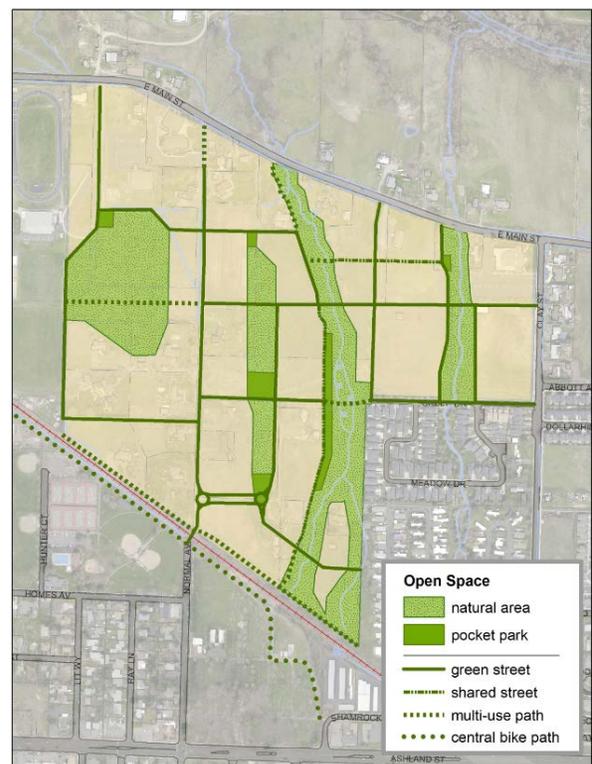
The Normal Neighborhood working group and the Planning Commission concurred with the sentiment that expressed that the provision of open space within the plan area has environmental, recreational, and aesthetic value to the neighborhood. The Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework’s Greenway and Open Space chapter has been amended to further emphasize the community value of open space retention with the following introductory statement (page 12).

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.

The neighborhood areas designated as future open space remain correlated with the recognized floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, and wetland buffer areas within the plan area. Further as the plan envisions the use of these open spaces for habitat preservation, passive recreation, and preservation of scenic views the boundaries of these spaces address the proposed street pattern to retain accessibility by the neighborhood residents.



Previously proposed Open Space Network (4/2014)



Revised Open Space Network(3/2015)



Neighborhood Vision

In working through the interrelated components of the neighborhood plan the working group determined that it was important to encourage the development of clustered housing that integrates with open space and respects the view shed, provide for a smooth transition between adjacent developments to promote neighborhood cohesiveness, provide open space in a coordinated manner, and secure an efficient circulation system. To articulate these broad objectives the working group drafted a neighborhood vision for the area which has been inserted at very beginning of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document to help guide future development in the area.

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 newly proposed chapter (18.3.4) has been modified from the one presented to the Planning Commission in April of last year as follows:

Code section	Change proposed
18.3.4.030 C.1	Added “A change in the Plan layout that provides an additional vehicular access point onto East Main Street or Clay Street.” as a major amendment requiring a Type II public hearing.
18.3.4.040 A.1-4	Modified Land Use designations to NN-1-5, NN-1-3.5, NN-1-3.5-C, and NN-2. Additionally changed the definition of NN-1-3.5-C to state “multiple compact attached and/or detached dwellings” instead of “multiple dwelling units”.
18.3.040 Table	Modified Land Use designations to NN-1-5, NN-1-3.5, NN-1-3.5-C, and NN-2. Noted the <i>Cottage Housing</i> residential use line is provided as a placeholder to be consistent with Unified Land Use Ordinance when amended.
18.3.050 Table	Included newly adopted dimensional standards (ULUO) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Front Yard to an unenclosed front porch - 8ft. or width of a public easement whichever is greater • Maintained 35ft or 2.5 story maximum height. (An increase to 40ft or three-stories through a conditional use permit process was recommended by the Planning Commission but not recommended by the working group. • Amended Maximum Lot Coverage percentages downward to match comparable city zones (NN-1-5 = 50%, NN-1-3.5= 55%, NN-2 = 65%) • Amended Minimum Required Landscaping percentages upward to match comparable city zones (NN-1-5 = 50%, NN-1-3.5= 45%, NN-2 = 35%) • Amended Minimum Outdoor Recreation Space requirement for NN-1-3.5 to match comparable city zones (NN-1-3.5 = not applicable)
18.3.4.060 B. 2	Cottage Housing standards were amended to note the requirements and applicable density bonuses are pending ULUO amendments.
18.3.4.075	Added a placeholder section to accommodate any future provisions relating to the establishment and applicability of an advance financing district within the area.
Complete ordinance	Corrected numerous references to the final adopted ULUO section and subsection numbering.



NEXT STEPS

The working group's recommendations on the final plan and implementing ordinance will be provided to the Planning Commission and City Council as part of the formal adoption process.

The Transportation Commission is scheduled to review the amendments relating to the transportation system at their regular meeting on April 23, 2015. The Transportation was unable to meet on March 24th as initially scheduled due to lack of a quorum.

The Normal Neighborhood Plan, plan maps, TSP amendments, and Normal Neighborhood District Land Use Ordinance are to come before the Planning Commission for a formal public hearing scheduled for April 28, 2015. The working group and commission commendations on the final plan and implementing ordinance will be provided to the City Council for their consideration during the final adoption public hearing scheduled for May 19, 2015.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework Document (dated March 2014)
- Normal Neighborhood District Draft Code Amendments (Chapter 18-3.13)
- Hardy Engineering summary of infrastructure costs and financing
 - East Main Street
 - Railroad crossing
- Normal Neighborhood Working Group Memo (dated 12/02/2014)
- “Family Friendly” development template
 - Illustration responding to Mayor’s State of the City proposal in the context of the proposed Normal Neighborhood Plan.
 - New normal Proposal (Mayor Stromberg)
- Public Letters
 - Vidmar letter (dated 3/31)
 - Miller letter dated (dated 3/23)

