



Helping People Help Themselves

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November 12, 2014

Dear Normal Neighborhood Working Group,

ACCESS would like to submit the following comments and recommendations to you in response to your most recent meeting discussions that took place on 10/23/14. During this meeting, a Draft document containing Recommendations to Council was reviewed and discussed. Merry Hart, ACCESS Housing Analyst, was in attendance at this meeting.

ACCESS develops, builds and manages affordable housing throughout Jackson County. Your recommendation to move higher density housing parcels adjacent to both railroad tracks and wetlands raises several concerns. From the standpoint of raising funds to build affordable housing, this location would almost certainly preclude the possibility of securing public dollars to construct in this location. The reason for this is that neither State nor Federal funding sources will support building affordable housing next to railroad tracks, as it is not considered a desirable location. Mitigation efforts (sound attenuation, etc.) are not considered relevant to this policy. This means, for example, that the City of Ashland would not be able to use its Community Development Block Grant dollars on a project so located.

We also understand that the City of Ashland has conducted studies indicating that the city has a high need for more multi-family developments and higher density housing. The Normal Neighborhood is well suited to allow the many types of zoning that could accommodate this need in a thoughtful, planned way and have it be compatible with existing neighborhoods.

There was also discussion about commercial development. As a policy matter, ACCESS supports the careful integration of appropriate commercial enterprise into residential housing developments. There was concern that an assisted living facility could be allowed and someone in the audience objected to that stating "a mom & pop store has a very different impact than a 100 unit assisted care". It may be useful to know that there are many memory care facilities that are much smaller, serving 15 or so residents, and that they might be a very nice fit in the neighborhood.

We support and agree that the City should play a role in the financing/implementation of transportation improvements that will need to be made to East Main and the railroad crossing.

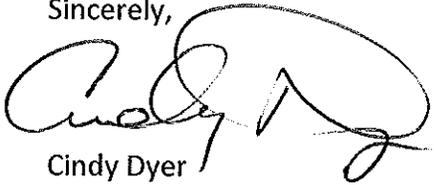
One final thought is related to the July 19, 2013 proposed rule issued by HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) concerning how HUD-funded jurisdictions must undertake some analysis in their communities. The proposed rule identifies four areas for local action:

1. Improving integrated living patterns and overcoming historic patterns of segregation
2. Reducing racial and ethnic concentrations of poverty
3. Reducing disparities in access to community assets such as education, transit access and employment, as well as exposure to environmental health hazards and other stressors that harm a person's quality of life.
4. Responding to disproportionate housing needs by protected class.

In response to this rule, the Fair Housing Council of Oregon has developed a checklist for local jurisdictions to use in reviewing their land use and subdivision ordinances and related practices. It is called "Examining Local Land Use with a Fair Housing Lens", www.fhco.org. A review of this information could be beneficial to all, before solidifying recommendations to the City Council.

We appreciate the planning efforts that have taken place and look forward to following the progress of what is sure to be a well thought out and inclusive neighborhood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cindy Dyer", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Cindy Dyer
Housing Director
ACCESS