

August 20, 2015

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Alma Rosa Alvarez, and my address is 491 Normal Avenue. I am writing you today, in lieu of presenting my comments at the public hearing scheduled for September 1, 2015, as I will be out of the state at that time.

While I would like to state that the city's work on establishing a plan for the area, now known as the Normal Neighborhood (NANP) is laudable, I believe our city has not fully anticipated what the addition of 450 units in this area means.

My first concern is with density and its attendant implications. Since October 2012, I, along with many of my neighbors voiced our opposition to the construction of 450 units in the Normal Neighborhood area. At the charrette, most of us felt comfortable with the development of 350 units. Some of our concerns, at that time, related to traffic flow. As is evident during the academic year, the traffic through Normal Avenue, leading into Homes is steady, and sometimes scary due to the lack of traffic signs (yield or stop signs) to help control the flow of traffic. Once Little League starts, the traffic on these streets increases. My ask to the council is to have the appropriate city personnel appointed to perform an analysis of traffic patterns on these streets during peak usage, and then to factor in what those traffic patterns would be with an additional 1000 residents. The concern we had in 2012 continues to be a concern for me, and other residents of my street, particularly those of us in the older Normal neighborhood.

My second concern, also related to density, deals with water availability. I was struck by Bill Molinar's comment on Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 that the NANP had taken into account climate change by anticipating drought in a cycle of once every five years. We have been in drought for at least three years. According to some experts, we have been in drought for four years. I believe that the city needs to recalculate density in relation to more regular, persistent drought consistent with climate change. I urge you to not approve a plan until drought factors are also more adequately considered. It would be a travesty to develop without adequate infrastructural support, and the quality of life that we so much love in Ashland would be compromised.

I want to be very clear about my position as a resident. I am not opposed to having a plan, and I am not opposed to development. Growth is natural within a city. I am also in favor of affordable housing. People that work, for example in the service industry, should be able to live in Ashland. I look forward to the diversity that affordable housing could bring to our city. I am, however, opposed to the development of housing that might not have adequate infrastructural support, particularly if some of that housing is designated for low-wage earners. I am also opposed to development that would alter the neighborhood feeling and relative safety of my street through unmanaged traffic. Finally, I am in support of a plan that will preserve the wetlands and the biological diversity of our region. I look forward to a plan that can do the various things outlined above. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alma Rosa Alvarez