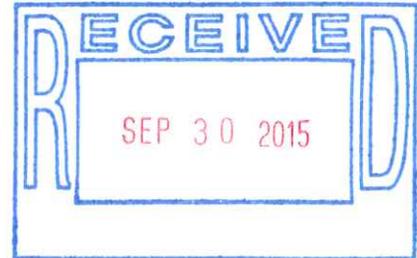


Bryce C. Anderson
2092 Creek Drive
Ashland, OR 97520

September 29, 2015

Mayor John Stromberg
Councilor Michael Morris
Councilor Rich Rosenthal
Councilor Stefani Seffinger
Councilor Greg Lemhouse
Councilor Carol Voisin
Councilor Pam Marsh
Ashland City Council
20 East Main Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520



Re: Normal Neighborhood Plan

Dear Mayor and Councilors,

As we have stated before, since our first involvement in the Normal Neighborhood Plan more than two years ago, the four homeowners' associations of Meadowbrook Park Estates, Ashland Meadows, Chautauqua Trace and East Village have consistently stated that we do not oppose development, and in fact favor reasonable and responsible development, particularly on the Baptist Church property, because this property is currently an eyesore and a fire hazard. We have also, however, consistently urged the following points:

1. We strongly oppose high density development on the Baptist Church property. Suburban residential zoning is appropriate for this property, as long as the density as developed is in fact at or below the 7.2 units per acre specified for the NN-1-3.5 zone.
2. We oppose the allowance of commercial development on this property. The area is a poor one for commercial development, and such development will increase already serious traffic hazards in this area.
3. We urge that East Main Street be improved, particularly on the south side, with curbs, gutters, sidewalks, bike lanes and a center turn lane from Walker Street to Clay Street before construction begins on any development involving more than one or two acres.

To date, every group that has examined these issues has expressed support for these points, and no member of any group has expressed any particular opposition to any of them. Indeed, all three points have support in the language of various parts of the plan. Nevertheless, the actual operative parts of the plan and its adopting ordinances conflict with all three of these points. We

ask the council to modify the plan in the ways specified below to meet these objectives.

1. Density and Land Use

The Plan specifically provides,

The NN-1-5, NN-1-3.5, zones are intended to preserve land and open space and provide housing opportunities for individual households through development of single-dwelling housing. [Plan, p. 6.]

It also contains pictures of the types of uses allowed in the various zones. [Plan, p. 12.] The various tables, however, do not distinguish between NN-1-3.5 and NN-2 when it comes to the construction of multi-family residential units. [Id.; see also Ordinance, p. 5.] As noted above, various members of the Planning Commission and the City Council have repeatedly expressed the view that apartment houses are not a desirable use for the NN-1-3.5 zone, and yet the plan appears to allow that use. While it may be argued that the 7.2 units per acre limit in the NN-1-3.5 zone would prohibit this use, the existing provisions for density bonuses could potentially expand density to more than 11 units per acre, making apartment houses an allowable use notwithstanding the provisions of the plan.

Residents in the four HOA's respectfully submit that an apartment house complex is not a use that is compatible with the existing suburban residential developments. Such a use would increase automobile traffic in an area that is already inadequately served by public transportation and ill-suited to pedestrian and bicycle traffic. We recognize that it is not practical to redo the provisions regarding bonus densities, but there is another alternative. If multi-family residential units were excluded in the NN-1-3.5 zone, then bonus densities could be used for cottage housing or other uses compatible with a suburban residential zone. We urge the council to change the use table at page 12 of the plan, as well as the use regulations in section 18.3.4.040(C) of the ordinance to exclude multiple dwelling residential units as an allowable use in the NN-1-3.5 zone, and include cottage housing as an allowable use.

2. Commercial Uses

The plan expressly recognizes that "the plan area . . . is a weak location for retail." [Plan, p. 5.] Nevertheless, the plan contains an NN-1-3.5-C zone on the Baptist Church property which can be used for retail sales and services, adjacent light manufacturing, and professional and medical offices. [See Ordinance, p. 5.] These commercial uses are entirely unsuitable for this area, particularly given the inadequate provisions for the improvement of East Main.

At its last meeting, the council amended the plan to cut in half the size of the NN-1-3.5C zone. This was an amendment which we welcomed, as far as it went, but we would urge the council, if not to eliminate commercial uses from this area, at least require a conditional use

permit for any commercial development in this area. In this way, the neighborhood will be protected from inappropriate and ill-advised commercial development while at the same time allowing flexibility in the future.

3. Improvement of East Main Street

Members of the Transportation Commission, the Planning Commission and the Normal Neighborhood Working Group have all expressed the opinion that East Main should be improved from Walker Street to Clay Street before or simultaneously with the actual construction of any development that borders East Main. The plan recognizes that East Main is already inadequate, and in need of such improvement. [Plan, p. 16, 18.] The plan, however, provides:

The City will consider establishing an Advance Financing District for off-site public facility improvements, as long as the City and the developer enter into a Developer's Agreement. The City's participation in a Normal Neighborhood advance financing district would be intended to achieve a positive impact for the whole of the City.

There does not appear, however, to be any provision for the establishment of such a district. [See proposed ordinance section 18.3.4.075.] In fact, such an ordinance was apparently studied in 2010, but never enacted.

The plan also states,

"The City recognizes that infrastructure and transportation improvements to East Main Street could potentially be completed in phases, dependent upon the impacts of proposed developments within the plan area."

This proposed language would seem to indicate that although the Baptist Church property will likely develop first, the improvement of East Main must await the development of the remainder of the Normal Avenue Plan area. This result is contrary to the recommendations of the Transportation Commission and of various members of the Planning Commission and City Council that East Main be improved along its entire length from Walker to Clay Streets concurrently with the approval of any development in the Plan area.

We realize that an ordinance cannot be written that would require the improvement of East Main Street as a condition of development. Nevertheless, the plan itself ought to include language that makes this improvement a high priority, with specific provisions for the financing and implementation of these improvements at the time development first takes place, so that residents in the surrounding neighborhoods do not have to put up with the traffic congestion and hazards for an indefinite period of time. Moreover, the improvements which the plan envisions

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should include curbs, gutters, sidewalks and bike lanes (as well as park strips if the council deems that appropriate) along the entire south side, as well as center turn lanes wherever there is an intersecting street. Asphalt multi-use strips merely postpone the required improvements while imposing unnecessary hazards on the users.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the residents of Meadowbrook Park Estates, Ashland Meadows, Chautauqua Trace and East Village, comprising more than 200 households abutting the plan area, respectfully request that the City Council revise the Normal Avenue Plan in these respects before approving it.

Very truly yours,



Bryce C. Anderson
Representative for Meadowbrook Park Estates HOA,
Ashland Meadows HOA, Chautauqua Trace HOA and
East Village HOA