

Tod and Paula Brannan outside Ashland

May 4, 2014, 2:42 PM

from: Tod Brannan and Paula Fox
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Ashland

We have recently moved to Ashland into the beautiful and peaceful Normal Avenue area that is now part of the Normal Neighborhood Plan. We do not want the Normal Avenue neighborhood to become a busy, congested area of high-density housing.

We have attended the planning commission meetings, and have read letters submitted by concerned citizens on the Open City Hall forum. Thus far, however, we have not heard definitive answers to many of the questions and issues raised, such as:

Growth projections: Has the city done growth projections? Have the projections been reviewed and confirmed by an independent state agency? Is high-density housing really needed at all? And, if so, why wouldn't the city want such housing closer to the main part of town, where walking, biking, and public transportation are more available.

Better alternatives: Building housing in the Normal Avenue area would be very costly in terms of infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, railroad crossing, etc.). Who would pay for those costs? And, if such building is needed, are there other areas already in the city limits that would be less costly to develop?

Unpopularity of the plan: The vast majority of people speaking at the city planning meetings and writing letters on the forum are against the Normal Neighborhood Plan. The only group in favor of the plan appears to be developers, and some don't even live in Ashland. Why would the city approve a plan that is overwhelming unpopular?

Wetland areas: Currently, there are several wetlands in the Normal Avenue acreage. The proposed plan allows for streets and housing to be build adjacent to and even over these natural features, which will undoubtedly affect the wild life and possibly the wetlands themselves. Will the city get approval from the appropriate state environmental agency before approving the proposed plan?

Water: The city already has a water problem, which is now magnified given the current drought situation. Why make is worse? Is the city prepared to develop more water resources **BEFORE** building more housing?

Traffic congestion: The proposed plan includes high-density housing near E. Main Street. This street is already very busy during peak periods (early morning and late afternoon). Is the city prepared to widen and modify E. Main Street **BEFORE** increasing population density?