

Normal Neighborhood Working Group - Meeting September 18, 2014

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1. What have we heard that WE LIKE in the current plan for Normal Neighborhood?

a. **Open Community Spaces** - We applaud the committee for retaining the outlines of the open spaces of the Wetlands and Creeks, including their 50' buffer zones. We **encourage the committee to keep the green spaces as outlined, regardless of any re-designations** that may occur now or in the future. We believe the open spaces are integral in a community, and having them delineated on the master plan map, as the spaces around them urbanize, will assure an environmental balance in a livable community.

In addition, we praise the comments by the committee to construct a connecting corridor for wildlife between the open spaces so their habitats don't become isolated and deteriorate. More porous pathways, either decomposed granite trails, grass pavers, or elevated boardwalks, would add to the walkable neighborhood quality of life for both human and animal users.

b. **Density Gradation** - We applaud the recognition of the proximity of the northern end of Normal Ave. to its rural neighbors, and the proximity of the southeastern end of Normal Ave. to the more developed city limits. **Promoting a density gradation (both south to north and lateral to central)** and affordable housing (NN-1-3.5), along the central swath of the New Normal Collector area of the Plan, will safeguard the existing rural community and landscape.

Not all affordable housing is multi-family high density. There are many programs out there, for an affordable housing developer to take advantage of, that provide assistance with building single family homes or cottage-type multi-family detached homes, e.g. Habitat for Humanity, Access, Inc., Ashland Community Land Trust, and Rogue Valley Community Development Corporation. Cottage Housing is designated in the 2013 Unified Land Use Ordinance as "single story, or one to one and 1/2 stories, or single story plus a loft. Building height not to exceed 18'. Roof pitch may extend up to 25' at the ridge."

We agree that the interior of the Plan area - along the New Normal Collector Road, should be zoned as NN-1-3.5 with a maximum density of 7.2 DU (dwelling units) /acre. **HOWEVER, reclassification along existing Normal Ave, should be reduced from NN-1-3.5 to NN-1-5, with a maximum density of 4.5 DU/acre**, as given in the Greene Subdivision, since prior construction, in this area of large lot/single-family residential homes, already exists as well.

These reclassifications will have the Normal Neighborhood Plan more sensibly approximate the future needs analysis of housing, as outlined in the 2011 City of Ashland Buildable Lands Inventory, which already shows an excess of required buildable land for our 20 year buildable supply. This more practical plan for density zoning will fit with the original intent of the Normal Neighborhood Plan, as well as AMC 18.74 - Prevention of inconsistent and disruptive designs in residential areas, to have "like next to like" with single family homes across from existing single family homes.

We are grateful someone actually asked the question at the last meeting regarding the likelihood of which parcels will actually develop. Some of our constituents feel so strongly opposed to ever converting their land that discussions of putting limitations on development "in perpetuity" have surfaced. It certainly would be better for the master plan to **know what the intentions are of the existing land owners**. Perhaps a mailed survey to property owners within the Normal Plan would help in the final design.

c. **Transportation Connectors** - We approve of the circuitous New Normal Collector road that immediately meanders to the east of the RR crossing, along with its traffic calming measures of roundabouts, planter islands, stop signs, and speed bumps. This north-south through street should be designed to follow the most likely areas of development and provide safe connectivity to E. Main St. without negatively impacting the unique characteristics of the current community on Normal Ave. We agree with the planning of any off-set street grid patterns, which would also help to decrease any vehicular speeds through the neighborhoods.

We agree with the **elimination of the shared street adjacent to the center wetlands**. Access to housing will be adequately provided by the New Normal Collector. We agree that the **Old Normal Ave. should NOT extend** beyond its current terminus **and NOT connect with E. Main St.** This would not only be a dangerous egress onto a blind curve, but it would detract from the quality of the current rural neighborhood with cut-through traffic zooming by established residences.

d. **Zoning Language** - We agree with the Working Group that the use of zoning language more typical of the rest of the City's zoning labels should be implemented in the Normal Neighborhood Plan, using the NN preface to identify properties within the district.

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2. What **barriers** to agreement do we see with the current Normal Neighborhood Plan?

a. **Straight Cut-Through N-S Connector** - Any straight through connecting street would produce a high volume of traffic that would be utilized by more than any development in the Normal Plan. Many reasons make this a barrier to our agreement with the Plan. Firstly, traffic would egress onto E. Main St. at a blind curve. Secondly, the widening that would be required for the traffic load would encroach onto already existing buildings, yards and set-backs. Thirdly, the neighborhood walkability and safety would be greatly reduced by random cars ignoring speed limits and increased traffic volumes.

b. **Multiple E-W Paved Connectors** - We oppose so many east-west connectors throughout the Plan. If the connectors are truly for the development, then only one to Clay St. and one to Normal Ave. are needed. All other **connections should be to enhance the walkability and neighborhood community**. If the Open Space design actually RESPECTS the natural resource and wildlife corridors/ habitats, then ONLY the New Normal Collector and footbridges should cross over these sensitive areas. Additional access would be available from the main New Normal Collector and small side/shared streets off of Old Normal into the newly developed **cul-de-sac neighborhoods with connections across the Open Spaces by habitat-sensitively designed foot bridges for bikes and pedestrians**. Then, we would truly have safe streets to share with vehicles and pedestrians since there would be no cut-through vehicular traffic, only foot traffic crossing the Open Spaces. East-West local streets would then be aligned with foot paths and connected as a walkable neighborhood.

We disagree with the Plan as currently designed with **so many east-west connections which discourage the productivity of farming and community gardening** by chopping the land into disconnected segments. To sustainably use the land, the more efficient design would be to avoid paved connector roads through such lands so that water and production management could be maximized.

If and when there is ever a request for future development of the large lots within the Greene Subdivision, the minor increase in housing density it would create would not require any additional East-West connection from the current Normal Ave. through to the middle school. **We oppose further road asphaltting**, especially adjacent to delicate wildlife habitats and open spaces.

c. **Density Bonuses adjacent to Open Spaces** - We strongly **disagree with the planning tool of density bonuses, especially adjacent to open spaces**. The Comp Plan (Chapter 8.09.07) specifically outlined the purchase of the natural area, designated Wetland #9, with a capital improvement program way back in the 1980's (Chptr.4.24 -Transfer of Development Rights for Wetlands, and Chapter. 8.16.3- Comp Plan Open Space Policy). Now that a master plan is being developed for these areas, the City should follow through with purchasing options rather than development options that will impact the resource forever. **Development density increases adjacent to natural wetland areas will compact soils to the point of altering aquifer recharge capabilities and retention of seasonal flood waters**, not to mention the effects on the environment, air quality, and habitats.

We also emphatically **oppose the options for higher density conditional uses in and near these sensitive areas**, e.g. Nursing homes, commercial businesses, multi-family attached housing, etc.

d. **External Transportation Links** - We strongly oppose the infrastructure costs being shared by the existing communities within and adjacent to the Normal Plan. An outline of **exact percentages of costs borne by developers and citizens should be included in the master plan for any annexation/development of Normal Neighborhood properties**. Any suggestion of an LID (Local Improvement District) attached to our property taxes would be a hardship we choose not to incur for the benefit of development around our neighborhood. A Capital Improvement Plan should be in place prior to permits for development. The **ENTIRE city population should be made aware of the costs** that upgrading roads and a railroad crossing will be incurred and shared for this area to develop. Voter approval should be integrated with the planning for Capital Improvements.

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3. How could this plan work for you and your constituency?

- a. Survey the property owners for their intent to develop, prior to finalizing the master plan.
- b. Reclassify densities to maintain existing neighborhood character, as well as reduce the zoning densities as outlined on current Normal Plan. Comply with the needed densities as indicated by the 20 year supply indicated in the 2011 Buildable Lands Inventory.
- c. Avoid cut-through roads across farm land, wetlands, and creeks by using cul-de-sac designs and foot bridges to preserve them and preserve the wildlife habitats/corridors.
- d. Preserve Open Spaces, regardless of any re-delineations.
- e. Avoid at all costs any straight road cut-throughs and egresses onto blind curves.
- f. Show the ENTIRE CITY public the financial plans for City upgrades required for this Plan, and share it City-wide for voter approval.
- g. Avoid Advanced Financing Loans by the City, so as to minimize the pay-off or default pressures, and urbanize sensibly, not hastily.
- h. Limit all building heights to 35' and 2.5 stories to comply with city wide AMC 18.22.040 and respect solar setbacks.
- i. Avoid density bonuses, and high density conditional uses, adjacent to Open Spaces
- j. Be considerate of existing neighborhoods and their livability: "like next to like".

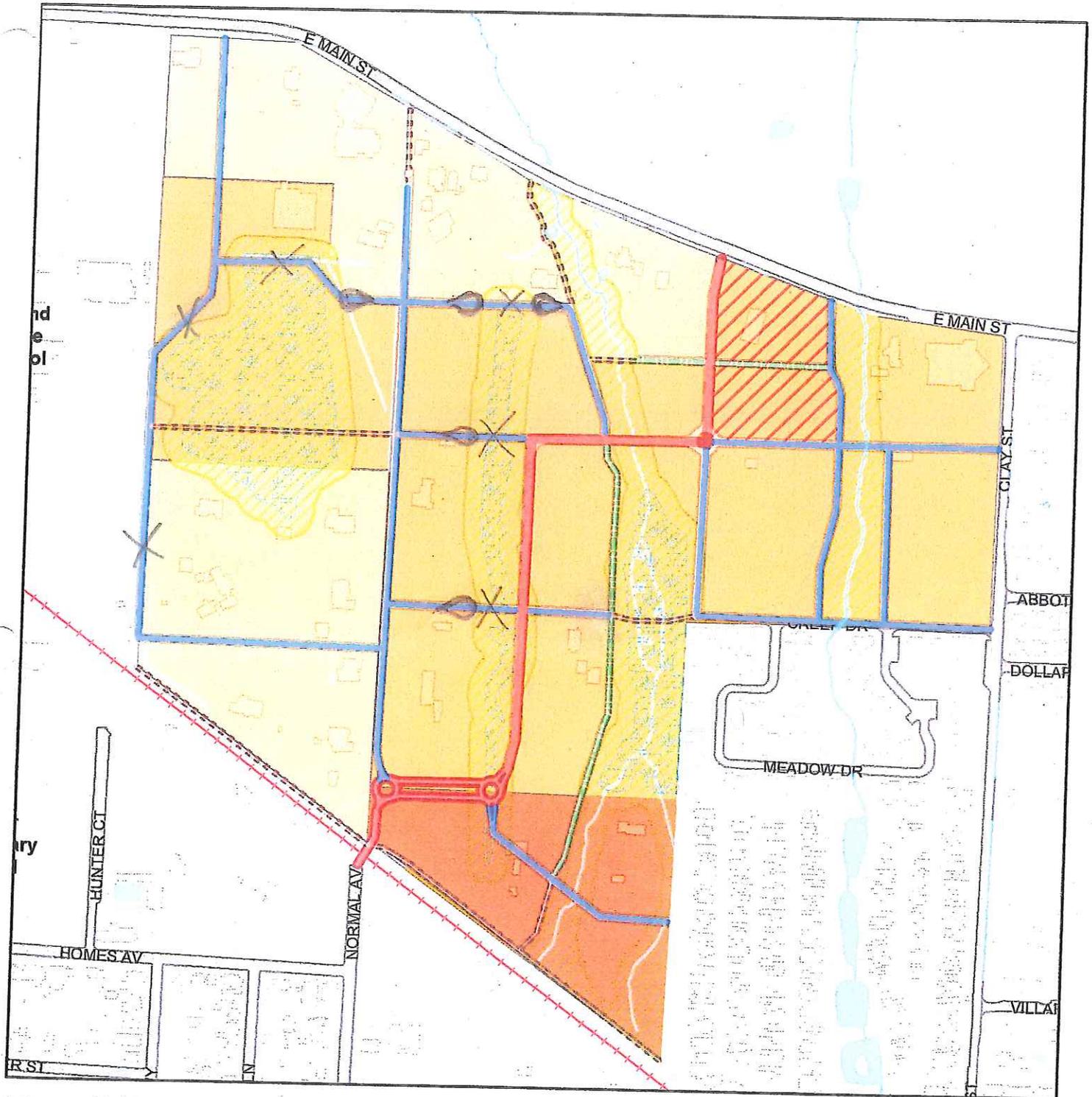
We are hopeful that together we can achieve the best community possible by recognizing the unique identity of our Normal Neighborhood and appreciate the Normal Group Working Committee placing a high value on this planning process that will manage growth to enhance our community character.

Thank you,

Sue DeMarinis, Normal Neighborhood Representative of 15 homeowners and approximately 24 acres.

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CITY OF ASHLAND



Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group Alternative Discussion Draft

Zone

-  NN-1-5
-  NN-1-3.5
-  NN-1-3.5-C
-  NN-2
-  Openspace Area
-  significant wetlands (2007 LWI)

Street Types

-  collector
-  path
-  street
-  shared street