

Public Testimony for Ashland City Council Meeting - September 1, 2015

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By Sue DeMarinis

Density – REDUCE!

Data according to the City of Ashland 2011 Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI):

- a. Buildable Acres within UGB = 252.2 acres
- b. Buildable acres within the NNP = 70.5 acres :or 28% of total UGB buildable acres set for NNP
- c. Buildable acres within UGB of Zone Classification N-1-3.5 (Suburban Residential) = 41.6 acres
- d. Buildable acres within NNP of Zone Classification N-1-3.5 (7.2 DU/acre) = ~31.05 acres *
:or 75% of UGB zone N-1-3.5 set for NNP
- e. Dwelling Units within UGB = 970 Dwelling Units (DU's)
- f. Dwelling Units within NNP = 450 Dwelling Units (DU's) :or 46% of total DU's in UGB set for NNP

*Note: calculated by (51.75 total acres zoned NN-1-3.5 in NNP) – (20.7 ac.Open Space zoned NN-1-3.5 in NNP) = 31.05 acres, **if all Open space is kept as delineated on the current July 2015 iteration of the NNP Master Plan.** If any re-delineations are incorporated for smaller outlines of NNP Open Space, then this zoning classification acreage increases further, and so does the density!

THE TOTAL buildable acres available in the UGB= 252.2acres. The NNP is 28% of the total UGB buildable acreage. **That makes the NNP slated for 28% of all Buildable land in the UGB, but with 46% of the density. As it stands now, the percentage of acreage for NN-1-3.5 zoning in the NNP is 75% of all acreage zoned NN-1-3.5 in the entire UGB!** Why is such a dense application of this zone classification needed in this area ONLY? Why should this area of the UGB carry such a heavily weighted density for this zoning designation?

According to the City's 2011 BLI's projection for the next 20 years, there are 252.2 buildable acres within the UGB, making the entire UGB capable of adding 970 Dwelling Units(DU) to the City's already available 1883 DU's. Why is the NNP slated for 450 of these 970 DU's? That's 46% of the entire UGB's Dwelling Units projected for the next 20 years, being planned for a single site. This density not only seems imbalanced and unfair to the existing surrounding neighborhoods, but it poses unnecessary problems, especially adjacent to 3 school zones, like concentrated vehicular pollution and congestion, with the potential of increased traffic accidents, and requires exorbitant street improvements to handle such a density.

Development near the RR tracks in Central Ashland, below the RR District, has been slowed due to contaminated soils. However, there is currently a plan for removal of such hazardous waste. This opens up a large area within the City for development, along with other undeveloped pockets (such as Gateway South at Tolman & Ashland Streets, & the Croman Mill Site). All of these areas are on the city's public transit corridor already, unlike the NNP.

According to the Mayor's State of the City speech this year, he stated, "that centrally located developments, with higher density mixed-use residential overlays (residences above commercial) would allow for lower density, family-friendly, development in the NNP and preservation of Ashland's largest wetland and multiple water resource ecosystems". The mayor also proposed, "to reserve the NNP area to provide larger detached homes suitable for families with children, built in cluster developments to allow shared gardens, play areas, and parking." How can the NNP Master Plan incorporate zoning for 450 dwelling units and uphold this quality of life in Ashland?

SOLUTION: It not only seems fair, but indeed prudent, to reduce the density of the number of dwelling units within the NNP by at least half, or to approximately 225 dwelling units, along with proportionately decreasing the NN-1-3.5 zoning within the 94 acre parcel of the NNP.

Infrastructure Costs – TOO EXPENSIVE!

The initial costs of basic infrastructure (upgrades/expansion of: streets, water and sewer treatment plants, electric, cable, etc.) for such a densely zoned NNP must be subsidized by SDC's from the City Funds, as well as the SDC's from potential developers as the area is built out. The NNP must show a City-Wide benefit to be able to use such funds. When the NNP is zoned for such massive density, where is the benefit for the entire City population?

Forward funding from the City of Ashland, i.e. Advanced Financing, has been suggested as a tool to offset initial infrastructure costs. If developers in the NNP invest in this tool to offset costs up front, they have 20 years for repayment back to the City of Ashland coffers. What happens if this area doesn't develop as expected within the payback timeframe, as we have seen in the Croman Mill Site still sitting undeveloped 5 years after their Master Plan was approved by the City Council? Will the city taxpayers then be expected to subsidize these unpaid monies for future necessary City expenditures?

SOLUTION: Less Density > Less Infrastructure Costs!

Zoning Designations underlying Open Spaces within the NNP- KEEP IT GREEN!

All open spaces, wetlands, and riparian areas within the NNP have an underlying zoning of NN-1-3.5. WHY? If the NNP Master Plan actually intends to keep these areas green, then why do they have an underlying zoning at all? This zoning classification poses multiple problems.

1. Any area adjacent to the Open Space on an individual tax lot is granted a 1.5x the zoning density on those areas in exchange for keeping a portion of their property in Open Space, e.g. an adjacent area to a NN-1-3.5 zone (7.2 DU/acre) would be allowed to up its building density to 10.8 DU/acre. This also opens up a multitude of uses that would be incongruent with the overall neighborhood feeling.
2. Any area adjacent to Open Space zoned NN-1-3.5 has the opportunity to apply for a Conditional Use permit for impactful and non-related uses of a family friendly neighborhood.
3. Dense construction adjacent to Open Spaces will be temporarily, and possibly permanently, destructive to wildlife corridors and natural ecosystems.
4. Dense zoning in and around Open Spaces in the NNP will not allow for interconnected pedestrian or bicycle pathways
5. Dense zoning over and around sensitive Open Spaces does NOT preserve our guidelines in the Comp Plan (18.63.070-D3) for avoiding impacts to wetlands except where no practical alternative exists. Reduce the density and design Cul-de-Sacs (avoid crossing over with roads) to protect water resource zones!
6. Any Mitigation (relocation offsite) of Designated Wetlands will further increase unneeded density and the NNP will lose planned green space if this option is not taken into account in the Planning regulations.

SOLUTION: Re-Zone NNP Open Spaces without an Underlying Zone classification, or
RE-Zone NNP Open Spaces at most with NN-1-5 (4.5 DU/acre)

Normal Neighborhood Plan - Open Space Network & Water Resource Lands - by Sue D.

The goal of the City of Ashland COMP Plan Open Space Policy (8.15) is to provide the people of Ashland with a variety, quantity, and quality of parks & open spaces. The Normal Neighborhood Plan (NNP) should exemplify the goals and values of the quality of life in Ashland.

Water resources within the NNP, which include State Designated Wetlands #9, #12, #4, as well as portions of Clay Creek and Cemetery Creek, are necessary for recharging of aquifers/wells, buffering storm water level fluctuations and holding temporary seasonal flood waters from damaging downstream properties, & providing water for surface agriculture, wildlife corridors and botanical habitats. Open spaces accentuate the livability and provide areas for community gardens, playgrounds, green space for relaxation. East-west connectivity **crossing over these areas should be minimized** by paved cul-de-sacs connecting to porous pathways, decomposed granite trails, grass pavers, elevated boardwalks or foot bridges, thereby diminishing the impact on the open spaces and providing safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists. The only paved road over these sensitive areas should be the New Normal Ave collector, making the NNP a more livable and walkable neighborhood for both humans and wildlife. (See revised map).

Greenway/conservation spaces should be retained as initially defined in the NNP, and was guided by the state approved designations in the Ashland Local Wetlands Inventory or LWI. These areas, which were clearly outlined and available to property owners prior to purchasing their property, already limited future development and protected these significant resources. Any recent or future delineations which **shrink wetlands and/or their surrounding open space will negatively affect the environmental balance** originally planned within the NNP community. Recent NNP re-delineations, done in extreme drought conditions, have decreased the overall open space/wetland calculation by 4.89 acres. How will this be compensated in the NNP if they are accepted?

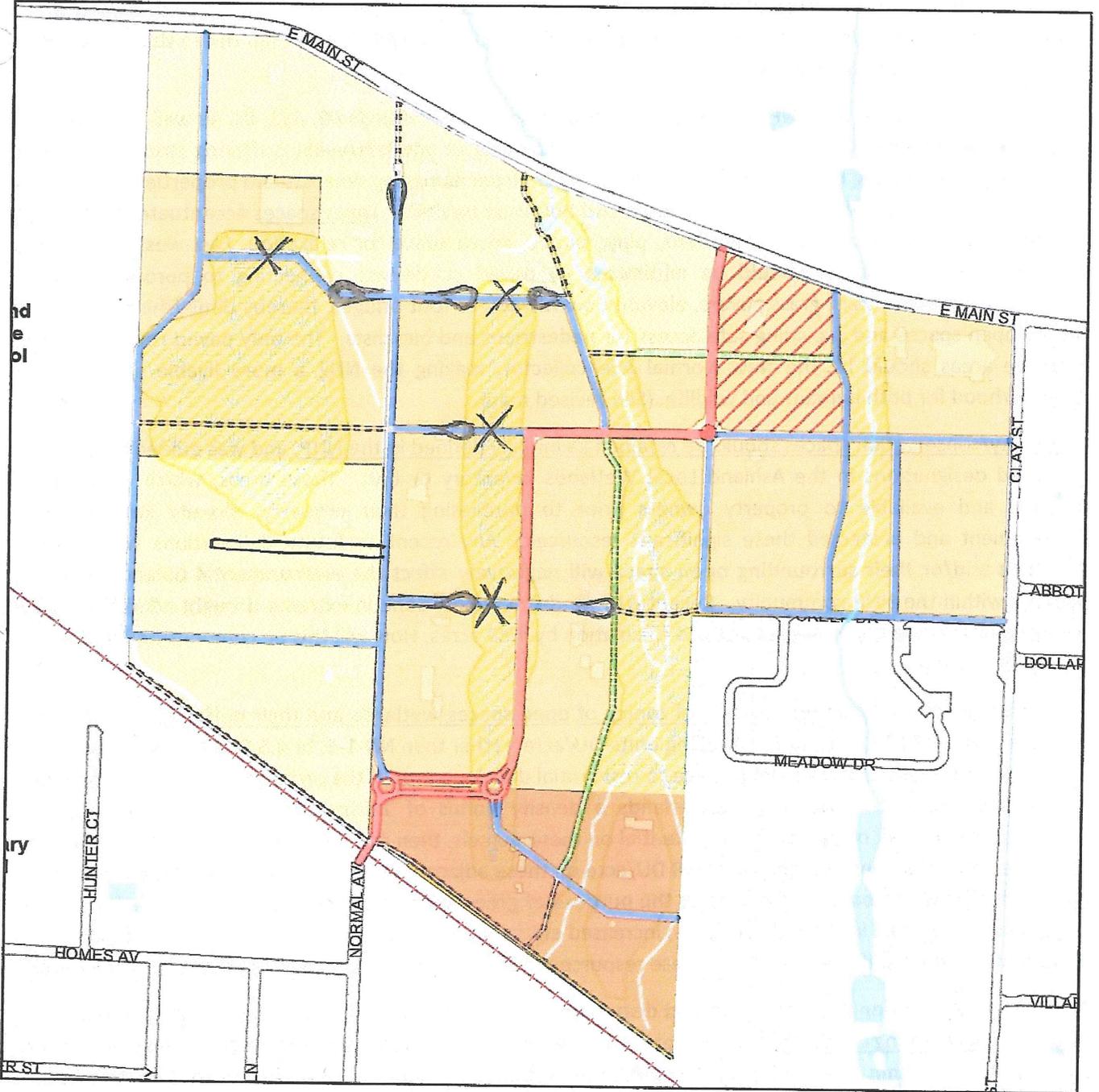
In addition, all of the underlying potential zoning of open spaces/wetlands and their buffer zones within the NNP are slated for NN-1-3.5, or 7.2 dwelling units-DU/acre, rather than NN-1-5, or 4.5 DU/ac. - which would be a more gradual transition from open space to residential development. If the proposed NNP regulation which grants land adjacent to open space/wetlands a density bonus of 1.5times the underlying zoning as a compensation for lack of development potential on these parcels, then NN-1-3.5 which is zoned for 7.2DU/ac. would be granted a bonus to allow for 10.8 DU/acre on these adjacent lands. Such **density bonuses next to open space/water resource lands defeats the purpose of green space connectivity** and only adds further soil compaction, increased impervious surfaces, increased emissions, additional light pollution & noise pollution-all detrimental to the habitat & function of these resources. Why are Open Spaces zoned so densely to begin with?

AMC 18.74 - Prevention of inconsistent and disruptive designs in residential areas: This municipal code would be violated by allowing conditional uses of light industrial or medical-involving more pavement and traffic, either adjacent to or within the zoning of NN-1-3.5, particularly surrounding open space/conservation areas. **Conditional Use Permits should exclude these types of non-conforming uses.**

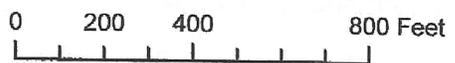
Comp Plan policy (8.16.3) is intended to **encourage school-park joint developments** as educational and scientific resources. With AMS literally in the backyard of the NNP, these wetland resources should not be ignored. In fact, it could create an ATTRACTION for public use and enjoyment, especially students. The NNP for this area should maintain this quality of life and share its resources to **benefit the whole city as a DESTINATION** that will justify the infrastructure expenses which will be paid for by the ENTIRE city. The water resource and open space lands need to be protected with the least impactful surrounding development designs and density.

Sue D. [Signature] 8/17/15

CITY OF ASHLAND



Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group Alternative Discussion Draft



Zone

- NN-1-5 4.50u
- NN-1-3.5 7.20u
- NN-1-3.5-C
- NN-2 13.50u
- Openspace Area
- significant wetlands (2007 LWI)

Street Types

- collector
- path
- street
- shared street