



GracePoint

Church of Nazarene

A Church for People Like You

To: Ashland City Council
From: Ashland GracePoint Church Board
Re: Public Comment About Normal Neighborhood Plan Adoption
Date: May 5, 2014

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. We are concerned about the restriction the adoption of the Normal Avenue Plan will place on future uses of the lot behind GracePoint Church. We have two major concerns that were not addressed during our participation in the planning hearings.

First, the plan designates the W-9 wetland, as adopted by local and state agencies, based on an estimate of this region rather than an actual delineation by species and groundwater survey of the property. The actual wetland area may be larger or, as we see it after seven years of mowing and maintaining, is significantly smaller than current estimates. In the case of the wetland being larger than current estimates, the area available for development will be smaller and our use will be limited. However, in the event that the required delineation results in a smaller area of wetland, there seems no remedy in the current plan for a reduction of the Open Space designation to allow us to use the space available for development. In speaking with the Ashland Community Development Department it was confirmed the W-9 open space size would not change even if a wetland delineation survey showed it to be smaller.

It seems that there is some attempted amelioration of this by density transfer from open space to the rest of our property, this allowing a maximum of 64 dwelling units on the entire property. This is a tradeoff but is only usable to us if we make unacceptable changes to the property by placing residential dwellings on our front field and in our parking lot. It does not allow us to make up for that loss to the South of the church in our field. From a five- to ten-year timeline, we have a property that really cannot be used. From a longer-term planning viewpoint this may be a reasonable planning concept, except I must remind this commission that this Nazarene Church was started in Ashland in 1905 (109 years ago) so we do plan with a long term viewpoint.

A combination of two possible solutions exists. The first is allowing the decrease or increase in the conservation area based on future accurate wetland delineation. Secondly, increasing the density allocation from NN-02 (10 units per acre) to NN-03 (15 units per acre) on the only usable space to the South of the church. This would leave the current NN-02 designation for the rest of the church's property. We request you adopt both.

This is the third time we have presented these concerns during this process. We have never received a specific response and feel that the planning process is pushing the "open space" agenda as a politically correct move at our expense. If we have no substantive response to our concerns we will consider this adoption a "public taking" and will consider taking legal action to reclaim our lost usable space.

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Shifting the focus now to the matter of two transportation corridors traversing this area. I am told, by staff, that an alley or multi-use path is required by code adjacent to open spaces. This means that in addition to a 50-foot swath through this property for the road, another 25 feet will be taken by the proposed alley. This is in addition to the required 50-foot buffer zone around wetlands. That raises the public taking for transportation corridors to about 75 feet and 125 feet if you consider the buffer zone. This seems exorbitant from our viewpoint. Our request as a solution is to move the current road as far to the south as allowable; within 50 feet of the W-9 open space. This would eliminate the coded need for another transportation corridor. Again we have presented this concern at the planning meeting and received no consideration or change in the plan.

Where in this code and planning action is there a use for this property? There feels like a public straightjacket to most reasonable uses of this property.

For the Church Board,

John Colwell
Ray Eddington