

August 10, 2015

TO: Ashland Planning Commission
FR: Sabra Hoffman, 345 Scenic Drive

RE: Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan

Governor Kate Brown described Oregon's four year drought and water shortages as the new normal. An editorial by The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times said this message was overdue. She has ordered stepped-up water conservation by state agencies. Ashland's Mayor recognized these challenging conditions when he recently endorsed the upcoming regional summit organized by Southern Oregon Climate Action Now.

On our smaller scale, my husband and I are adjusting to the new normal without our large garden and green yard as our TID access is diverted for the City-wide needs. We recognize and appreciate efforts by other Ashlanders to be good citizens on water use. We hope circumstances won't require of us all ongoing restrictions on water consumption, increasing water costs, and decreasing water quality, although these conditions may further describe our community's new reality.

Through September 15, the Planning Commission and City Council will be considering and may adopt the Normal Avenue Neighborhood (NAN) Plan which paves the way for increased demands on Ashland's tenuous water supply by potentially 450 residential units. However, the Council won't begin its study of water issues and policy until after September 15.

Oregon's comprehensive approach to land use planning does not yet reflect the new normal of water shortages in the LCDC goals. The law is lagging behind our new reality. As we know, the regional context has dramatically changed since the planning process for the NAN Plan began. Then, the water supply was not a major issue; now, we're in the fourth year of a drought.

Ashlanders do not have to wait until we are required by Oregon law to assess our water resources and needs before facilitating a major residential development by adopting the NAN Plan at this time. The City can get ahead of changed circumstances, discuss options and tradeoffs with citizens, confer with experts, and develop policies appropriate for our new water reality.

I urge the Planning Commission to delay ratifying the NAN Plan until after the City Council's water study and updated Water Master Plan.