

ASHLAND PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT
March 11, 2014

PLANNING ACTION: PL-2013-01858

APPLICANT: City of Ashland

LOCATION: Normal Neighborhood District Boundary

ZONE DESIGNATION: Jackson County RR-5 (Rural Residential 5 acres)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION: City of Ashland Single-Family and Suburban
Residential
Jackson County Rural Residential Lands

ORDINANCE REFERENCE: Chapter 18-3.13 Normal Neighborhood District

STATEWIDE PLANNING GOALS: Goal 2 Land Use Planning
Goal 14 Urbanization

OREGON REVISED STATUTES (ORS): Chapter 197 – Comprehensive Land Use Planning
Coordination

REQUEST: To amend the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan Map, Transportation System Plan, and Ashland Land Use Ordinance to implement the Normal Neighborhood Plan.

I. Relevant Facts

A. Background - History of Application

Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 2, Land Use Planning, as well as Chapter 197 of the Oregon Revised Statutes requires a land use planning process and policy framework as a basis for all decision and actions related to use of land. Specifically, plans and implementation measures such as ordinances controlling the use and construction are permitted as measures for carrying out Comprehensive Plans.

Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 14, Urbanization, directs communities to plan for the orderly and efficient transition from rural to urban land use, to accommodate urban population and urban employment inside urban growth boundaries, to ensure efficient use of land, and to provide for livable communities. The existing Comprehensive Plan designation for the Normal Neighborhood Plan area was

established in 1981. The area's development as low density residential, changes in the City's population demographics, land availability, housing supply and type, and water resource protection standards over the decades warrant a re-evaluation of the area's Comprehensive Plan designations in consideration of these changed conditions.

In March of 2011 the City Council directed the Community Development Department to apply for a Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant to prepare a master plan for the 94 acre Normal Neighborhood area, and the City's project was selected for award in June 2011. The TGM program is a joint program of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

The City of Ashland received the TGM grant for consultant services in May 2012 to undertake the neighborhood planning process. A number of urban design, planning, engineering, environmental services and architecture firms were selected to prepare the draft plan. Consultants included Parametrix Inc, UrbsWorks Urban Design, Joseph Readdy Architect, Qamar Architecture and Town Planning, Leland Consulting Group housing market analysts, and Nevue Ngan Landscape Architects. The submission of preliminary draft plan materials and a revised final draft plan concluded the TGM funded portion of the project in September 2013.

The neighborhood planning process has involved considerable public involvement including a resident survey, two neighborhood meetings, three public open houses, two Planning Commission site visits, individual stakeholder meetings with property owners and nearby residents, and numerous Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Housing Commission and City Council study sessions. The design phase of the planning process was initiated in October 2012 with a three day public design charrette, or workshop. The charrette allowed for the identification of issues and concerns, development of goals and objectives for the master plan, and creation of a conceptual neighborhood design. Following the October 2012 charrette, plan options were developed and presented at study sessions and public open houses to obtain public input to assist the design team, city staff, and the Planning Commission to further refine the plan concept. The final Normal Neighborhood Plan, and draft implementing ordinances, were completed in February 2014 and initially presented to the Planning Commission at a study session on February 25th, 2014.

The issues and opportunities identified during the first public workshop and key participants meetings were used to create the project goals and objectives as listed below:

- Maximize land use efficiency by concentrating housing in a strategically located area within the City Urban Growth Boundary.

- Create a development pattern of blocks and streets that supports a balanced, multi-modal transportation system that offers a full range of choices to its occupants and that supports active transportation opportunities like walking, bicycling or using transit in those areas planned for transit service;
- Provide a range of housing choices and a variety of open space, public space, and green infrastructure improvements, in a way that preserves and enhances the area's creeks and wetlands;
- Design a local street grid for the Project Area including connections to existing and planned street, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities beyond the project area that overcome the challenges to connectivity and better integrate the area into the Ashland transportation system;
- Provide for pedestrian and bicycle routes and facility improvements within the plan area that will provide safe access to local schools, activities, neighborhoods, and destinations;
- Apply those principles of low impact development to minimize the extent and initial cost of new infrastructure and to promote the benefits of stormwater management;
- Provide developable alternatives at planned densities that will eliminate the need for expansion of the urban growth boundary; and
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by implementing transportation and land use plans that encourage reductions in vehicle miles traveled.

Background Studies

To inform the neighborhood planning process a number of studies were completed and previously presented to the Planning Commission in support of this project including:

- A [Buildable Lands Inventory](#) (approved November 15, 2011- ordinance #3055) provided a basis for evaluation of the amount of available land within the City Limits and Urban Growth Boundary.
- A [Housing Needs Analysis](#) (approved September 3, 2013 - ordinance #3085), summarized the types of housing that have been developed throughout the City in the recent decades, as well as the projected needed housing based on income and population demographics.
- An [Executive Summary of Existing Conditions](#) to provide background information for the Normal plan area including the [results of a resident survey](#) conducted in June-July 2012.
- An analysis of five components of the neighborhood design including infrastructure, mobility, sustainability, open space and greenways, and housing and land use.
 - [Infrastructure Framework](#)

- [Sustainability Framework](#)
- [Mobility Framework](#)
- [Greenway and Open space Framework](#)
- [Housing and Land Use Framework](#)
- The traffic engineering firm SCJ Alliance completed an [Existing Traffic Conditions technical memorandum](#) (dated September 12, 2012) , and a [Future Traffic Analysis](#) (dated November 19, 2013) to investigate current and future traffic conditions in the Normal Neighborhood Plan study area.

B. Detailed Description of the Site and Proposal

The Normal Neighborhood Plan District is situated between East Main Street to the north and the railroad tracks to the south, Clay Street to the east and the Ashland Middle School to the west. Currently, the 94 acre area has a mix of Comprehensive Plan designations including single family residential and suburban residential, and is presently outside the City of Ashland (City) city limits but within the City Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

This area constitutes the largest remaining area of residentially designated land that is suitable for medium- to high-density development which remains largely vacant or redevelopable. The plan area contains 35 properties ranging in size between 0.38 acres up to 9.96 acres. There are 26 property owners within the plan area with a number owning multiple parcels. Residential development in the plan area has historically been low density large lot single family homes consistent with Jackson County's rural residential zoning standards.

The Normal Neighborhood Plan District includes significant natural features including Cemetery Creek, Clay Creek, and three designated wetlands (W9, W12, W4) that are included on the City of Ashland 2007 Local Wetland Inventory (LWI). The local wetland inventory was approved by the Department of State Lands (DSL) which means the LWI is part of the Statewide Wetland Inventory. The mapped wetland boundaries are estimated boundaries, they have not been surveyed, and there are inherent limitations in mapping accuracy as hydrology conditions change over time. The City of Ashland will require applicants for annexation with potential wetlands on their property to obtain a wetland delineation by a qualified consultant and submit it to DSL and the City prior to development.

The *Normal Neighborhood Plan* is comprised of Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document, official Normal Neighborhood Plan maps, and the proposed Normal Neighborhood District land use ordinance amendments (Ch. 18-3.13). Collectively these documents provide the underlying conceptual and regulatory structure for area's future development. Development of this area is expected to

occur in an incremental way, as individual parcels propose annexation for specific housing developments. An adopted neighborhood plan allows individual development proposals to better coordinate the provision of streets, pedestrian connections, utilities, storm water management, and open space. Such an approach can ultimately help reduce development costs through appropriate sizing of needed facilities, provision of easements, and secured street access. Additionally a significant benefit of an adopted plan is a clear expectation and understanding regarding the level of development anticipated by both developers and neighboring residents. In this way the development and annexation process for all properties with the plan area is streamlined while ensuring the City can accommodate its future growth in a systematic and efficient manner.

The proposal involves Comprehensive Plan Map amendments, Transportation System Plan amendments, as well as amendments to the proposed Ashland Unified Land Use Ordinance (ULUO). The proposed implementation plan includes:

- Adopting the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document as a supporting document to the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Adoption of official Normal Neighborhood Plan maps:
 - Land Use Designations Map (NN-01, NN-02, NN-03, NN-03C)
 - Street Network
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Network
 - Street network: Green Streets
 - Open Space Network
- Amending the Ashland Comprehensive Plan Map to create a designation for the Normal Neighborhood Plan District, and revised boundaries for the Conservation Areas within the plan area.
- Amending the Transportation System Plan (TSP) as follows:
 - Amend the Street Dedication Map (TSP Figure 10-1) to incorporate the plan area's proposed Street Network, and reclassification of Normal "Avenue" to be a Neighborhood Collector.
 - Amend the Planned Intersection and Roadway Improvement Map (TSP Figure 10-3) to include East Main Street as a Planned Roadway Project.
 - Amend the Planned Bikeway Network Map to incorporate the planned multiuse trails within the Normal Neighborhood Plan.
- Amend the Street Standards to incorporate Shared Streets.
- The draft Unified Land Use Ordinance will be revised through a separate legislative planning action to include a new Chapter 18-3.13 Normal Neighborhood District, to guide and direct both public and private improvements. Additionally, multiple section of Chapter 18 will be amended to provide reference to, and consistency with, the proposed Chapter 18-3.13 Normal Neighborhood District.

II. Project Impact

A. Approval Process and Noticing

The proposal involves Comprehensive Plan and Transportation System Plan amendments, as well as additions and revisions to the Ashland Unified Land Use Ordinance (ULUO) necessary to implement the Normal Neighborhood Plan. The Planning Commission makes a recommendation on the package of amendments, and the City Council makes the final decision.

Approximately 200 written notices (postcards) were mailed to property owners in and surrounding the Normal Neighborhood District boundary regarding the Planning Commission public hearing (March 11th, 2014) and City Council public hearing (May 6th, 2014). A notice was published in the newspaper and a meeting announcement was emailed to residents and workshop/open house participants that provided their email addresses to the City. Meeting announcements and plan materials are posted on the project web page www.ashland.or.us/normalplan

B. Proposal Impact

The Planned Housing Types and Land Use Designations

The proposed Normal Neighborhood District will contain four residential zones, NN-01, NN-2, NN-03, and NN-O3-C. The use regulations and development standards set forth in the proposed land use ordinance (Ch. 18-3.13) for these zones are intended to provide a significant degree of flexibility as to the form and character of individual developments. Affordable housing with the plan area would be provided by future development as a condition of annexation consistent with current requirements. The Normal Neighborhood Land Use Zones map establishes the proposed designations for the properties within the district.

NN-01:

The Land Use designation NN-01 is intended to provide single family dwellings, accessory residential units, and cottage housing with a base density of 5 units per acre. The “cottage” housing type is to be consistent with the standards proposed in the Unified Land Use Ordinance as proposed under a separate legislative planning action.

NN-02

The NN-02 designation provides housing opportunities for individual households through development of a mix of single-dwelling housing, duplexes, townhomes, accessory residential units, and pedestrian oriented clustered housing with a base density of 10 units per acre. Clustered housing, commonly referred to as “pocket neighborhoods”, are a new housing type envisioned for the plan area where multiple compact detached or attached dwellings are grouped around common

open space. Through the consolidation of common open space and or parking cluster housing developments can often achieve a housing density comparable to attached row houses or low-rise apartments, yet with a lower profile retaining the appearance of traditional single-family homes.

NN-03

The NN-03 land use designation is intended to address Ashland's housing needs through development of multi-dwelling housing with a base density of 15 units per acre.

NN-03-C

The NN-03-C zone is a residential designation consistent with NN-03, however it would additionally allow for limited neighborhood serving commercial uses such as a coffee shop on the ground floor.

Greenway and Open Space

The Plan's approach to the greenway and open space framework is establish "Conservation Areas" through a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Map. As proposed these areas are to include FEMA's 100 year floodplain, Ashland's designated floodplain boundaries, wetlands identified in the 2007 Local Wetland Inventory, and wetland and riparian buffer areas identified in the Water Resource Protection Zone ordinance. Precluding development in these areas will reduce or prevent the detrimental effects of flood waters, support native vegetation, provide habitat and a travel corridors for wildlife, and promote environmental quality by absorbing, storing, and releasing storm water. The Open Space Network Map shows the areas intended to be preserved as natural areas or open space within the district which absent of any environmental constraints would additionally provide recreational amenities to the districts residents.

Streams and wetlands will be maintained as amenities with access to area residents due to the carefully considered transportation network that ensures that these areas are not hidden in back yards. Accommodation of the pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile circulation along the edges of the riparian zones and designated wetlands provides visual and physical access and increases the buffer zones between pockets of development enhancing the character of openness within the plan area.

Transportation

The Normal Neighborhood Plan includes a transportation framework that would be implemented by the proposed amendments to the Transportation System Plan (TSP) and Normal Neighborhood District Standards as . The transportation framework includes a street network, a pedestrian and bicycle framework, and a green street framework. The general location of future roads and paths is addressed by the Normal Neighborhood Plan Street Network Map, although design and engineering at

the time of the actual development will determine their precise locations. The proposed Street Network additionally includes designations for streets within the plan area that are to be developed as “green streets” designed to capture and treat storm water in conformance with the City of Ashland Storm Water Master Plan. The proposed street network would amend to the TSP’s Street Dedication Map in the Normal Neighborhood District area.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Network map includes facilities incorporated into the streets, as well as off-road multi-use paths including the establishment of two paths crossings Cemetery Creek, paths or shared streets along the west side of Cemetery Creek, a path connecting the terminus of the existing Normal Avenue to East main Street, and a connection from the plan area to the eastern boundary of the Ashland Middle School property. The proposed multi-use paths would amend to the TSP’s Planned Bikeway Network Map in the Normal Neighborhood District area.

The Normal Avenue neighborhood’s internal street network has largely been designed to keep travel speeds in the range of 20 mph by introducing elements such as a planted median, small traffic circles, and subtle changes in direction at block intersections. The backbone of the street network is a re-routed neighborhood collector that extends from the southern intersection at a future improved Rail Road Crossing, to East Main Street between Clay Creek and Cemetery Creek. Given the anticipated traffic volumes on this new road being approximately 1000 average daily trips it is not necessary that it be classified as an “Avenue” but rather a “Neighborhood Collector” designation would suffice. Neighborhood Collectors are expected to accommodate 1500 to 5000 vehicle trips per day and as such this lesser classification would adequately accommodate expected use.

The Normal Neighborhood plan also introduces a street type that was recently included in the Transportation System Plan: the “shared street”. A shared street is a very low speed street where all of the functions of the transportation system coexist in the same space. There are no individual sidewalks separated from the street surface by curbs and planted medians. There are no bicycle lanes separated from the street by painted lines. The low volumes, low-speeds, narrow cross-section, and traffic calming design elements make it possible for all users safely occupy the street surface by yielding to the slowest and most vulnerable present at a given moment.

The use of rear lane alleys helps to reduce the extent of paved areas, and will support a complete grid of finely-grained urban blocks. These alleys will provide the primary access to garages and backyards. The specific alley locations within the designated blocks is left to future development site design considerations, subject to the maximum block length and parking access standards. As such those potential alley locations most subject to adjustment are not included in the Street Network map but it

is expected that future development will provide alleys to meet access management and connectivity standards.

The Future Traffic Analysis report by SCJ Alliance found that all existing intersections in vicinity of the project are expected to continue to function within operational standards in the year 2038 at full build out of the neighborhood plan area. The report recommended that East Main Street should be improved to comply with existing City standards at which point that the improved Avenue could accommodate vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic, and that each of the proposed street intersections with East Main Street would function within applicable operational standards.

Plan Amendments

A minor and major amendment process is included in the proposed Chapter 18-3.13 Normal Neighborhood District, which will be the land use ordinance chapter governing the future development of properties within the plan area. The proposed amendment process provides flexibility to address unforeseen changes in conditions such as shifts in demand for types of uses, and physical or natural constraint challenges in individual developments.

- Major amendments provide for a change in a land use overlay, modification of the street layout plan or other transportation facility, reduction or elimination of designated Conservation Areas, a change in the applicable standards, and any other changes not listed.
- Minor amendments include shifting the location of streets, alleys or paths more than 50 feet, adjustments to the boundaries of designated Conservation Areas, and changes in dimensional standard requirements not including building height and residential density.

C. Discussion Items

The attached Normal Neighborhood Plan maps, Framework Document, and draft land use ordinance (18-3.13), have been revised to include items the Planning Commission has discussed over the past several months. A summary of the highlights of the latest revisions as follows.

- Designation of open space lands as protected conservation areas.
- Provisions allowing the transfer of housing density out of the water resource protection zones.
- Establishment of a minor amendment process to allow final open space locations to be moved to correlate with natural features (future wetland locations and boundaries), and a major amendment process if a proposal would reduce the contiguous acreage of conservation area/open space as represented in the plan.

- Flexibility to allow shared streets to alternatively be developed as alleys or multiuse paths where appropriate adjacent to water protection zones.
- Inclusion of mandatory standards relating to storm water management.
- Alignment of streets and zoning to correlate with existing property lines.
- A change in the street designation of the previously proposed alley in the North west portion of the plan area (Wetland 12) to be a shared Street, thereby allowing the potential to be alternatively developed as a multiuse path if necessary to preserve wetlands or open space.
- Clarification to the description of Pedestrian Oriented Cluster Housing within the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework document.

III. Procedural – Required Burden of Proof

18.108.060 Standards for Type III Planning Actions:

1. Zone changes, zoning map amendments and comprehensive plan map changes subject to the Type III procedure as described in subsection A of this section may be approved if in compliance with the comprehensive plan and the application demonstrates that one or more of the following:
 - a. The change implements a public need, other than the provision of affordable housing, supported by the Comprehensive Plan; or
 - b. A substantial change in circumstances has occurred since the existing zoning or Plan designation was proposed, necessitating the need to adjust to the changed circumstances; or
 - c. Circumstances relating to the general public welfare exist that require such an action; or
 - d. Proposed increases in residential zoning density resulting from a change from one zoning district to another zoning district, will provide 25% of the proposed base density as affordable housing consistent with the approval standards set forth in 18.106.030(G);or
 - e. Increases in residential zoning density of four units or greater on commercial, employment or industrial zoned lands (i.e. Residential Overlay), will not negatively impact the City of Ashland's commercial and industrial land supply as required in the Comprehensive Plan, and will provide 25% of the proposed base density as affordable housing consistent with the approval standards set forth in 18.106.030(G).

The total number of affordable units described in sections D or E shall be determined by rounding down fractional answers to the nearest whole unit. A deed restriction, or similar legal instrument, shall be used to guarantee compliance with affordable criteria for a period of not less than 60 years. Sections D and E do not apply to council initiated actions.

18.108.170 Legislative Amendments

A. It may be necessary from time to time to amend the text of the Land Use Ordinance or make other legislative amendments in order to conform with the comprehensive plan or to meet other

changes in circumstances and conditions. A legislative amendment is a legislative act solely within the authority of the Council.

B. A legislative amendment may be initiated by the Council, by the Commission, or by application of a property owner or resident of the City. The Commission shall conduct a public hearing on the proposed amendment at its earliest practicable meeting after it is submitted, and within thirty days after the hearing, recommend to the Council, approval, disapproval, or modification of the proposed amendment.

C. An application for amendment by a property owner or resident shall be filed with the Planning Department thirty days prior to the Commission meeting at which the proposal is to be first considered. The application shall be accompanied by the required fee.

D. Before taking final action on a proposed amendment, the Commission shall hold a public hearing. After receipt of the report on the amendment from the Commission, the Council shall hold a public hearing on the amendment. Notice of time and place of the public hearings and a brief description of the proposed amendment shall be given notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the City not less than ten days prior to the date of hearing.

E. No application of a property owner or resident for a legislative amendment shall be considered by the Commission within the twelve month period immediately following a previous denial of such request, except the Commission may permit a new application if, in the opinion of the Commission, new evidence or a change of circumstances warrant it.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The planning process which resulted in the Normal neighborhood Plan involved a wide variety of participants including the general public, property owners and neighboring residents. Staff believes the revisions that have been made in the development of the implementation package over the last 15 months have refined and improved the neighborhood plan, and are largely consistent with the original plan goals and objectives.

Staff recommends approval of the Comprehensive Plan Map amendments, adoption of the official Normal Neighborhood Plan Maps, and adoption of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework as a technical supporting document of the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff recommends the Transportation System Plan be amended to incorporate the Normal Neighborhood Street network as proposed. The Transportation Commission recommended that the proposed Neighborhood Collector be the sole vehicular connection to East Main Street, thereby recommending elimination of two of the three intersections as proposed in the draft plan.

The proposed Normal Neighborhood District Land Use ordinance will be reviewed as part of the broader Unified Land Use Ordinance amendment process. However, given

the interrelated nature of the Normal Neighborhood Plan elements, the Planning Commission is asked to provide recommendations on this ordinance as part of tonight's hearing. Staff recommends approval of the Normal Neighborhood District Land Use ordinance.

Attachments

- Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework Document (March 2014)
- Normal Neighborhood Plan maps:
 - Comprehensive Plan Map amendment
 - Land Use Zones
 - Street Network
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Network
 - Street network: Green Streets
 - Open Space Network
- Normal Neighborhood District Chapter 18 Code Amendments (draft dated 3/11/14)
- Letters:
 - Open City Hall public comments as of 3/5/14
 - Hunter letter dated 2/25/14
 - Public letters submitted relating to prior iterations of the draft plan are not physically attached to this Staff Report, however they remain available online at www.ashland.or.us/normalplan including the following electronically linked letters:
 - [DeMarinis letter and exhibit \(10/31/2013\)](#)
 - [DeMarinis letter and exhibits \(10/8/13\)](#)
 - [Meadowbrook Home Owners \(Anderson\) letter and exhibits \(10/8/13\)](#)
 - [Ashland Meadows \(Skuratowicz\) letter \(10/8/13\)](#)
 - [Koopman letter and exhibits \(10/8/13\)](#)
 - [Lutz letter \(9/26/2013\)](#)
 - [Vidmar letter \(7/29/13\)](#)
 - [Carse letter \(6/27/13\)](#)
 - [Gracepoint letter \(6/12/13\)](#)
 - [Vidmar letter \(4/26/13\)](#)
 - [Shore letter \(4/10/13\)](#)
 - [Marshall letter \(4/10/13\)](#)
 - [Horn letter \(3/05/13\)](#)
 - [Filson letter \(2/25/13\)](#)
 - [Vidmar letter \(2/25/203\)](#)