

December 1, 2020 Planning Commission Update to Council

Good evening, Honorable Mayor & Council. I'm Haywood Norton, chair of the Ashland Planning Commission which also includes members Lynn Thompson, Kerry Kencairn, Roger Pearce, Michael Dawkins, and Alan Harper. Commissioner Troy Brown after 8 years of dedicated service did not renew when his term ended earlier this year. The Commission currently has one vacant position which the Mayor indicated earlier this evening he is in the process of making an appointment which will fill the vacancy.

2020 has been an interesting year. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic and the subsequent Alameda Fire, two of the Planning Commission's 12 regular monthly meetings were cancelled. Two other meetings had broadcast glitches as the Commission was transitioning to Zoom video meetings and had to be stopped. The Planning Commission was nonetheless able to continue to carry out its duties, conducting all meetings since April via Zoom, with meetings being broadcast on local television and live-streamed on the internet. Importantly, thanks to the public noticing efforts taken by staff, I have not heard any major complaints about the zoom meeting format. Both the Tree Commission and the Historic Commission are coming on board to conduct their meetings via Zoom as well, and we look forward to seeing their recommendations again.

During this past 2020 year, the Planning Commission has conducted land use hearings for:

- ✓ Two appeals of staff decisions.
- ✓ Two mixed-use buildings totaling 24,000 square feet, with a total of 17 new dwelling units.
- ✓ Four cottage housing developments totaling 42 new units.
- ✓ A significant addition/remodel to Helman Elementary School
- ✓ And a 16.87 acre annexation on the north-end of town that is presently under consideration by the Council.

This past year, the Planning Commission has reviewed three Zoning Ordinance amendments dealing with:

1. Downtown Plaza Space Requirements

2. Open Space Standards for which the Council approved second reading at its November 17th meeting, and
3. Affordable Housing Requirements and Standards which are on your agenda tonight for second reading.

As I have reported, the Planning Commission reviewed and approved four cottage housing projects. These projects achieve the intent of the Cottage Housing Ordinance to provide a means for more needed units on single-family zoned properties. These smaller homes projects required less parking, consolidated parking areas, and detailed open space requirements that allow the projects to be built in a manner compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Two of these cottage housing projects encountered strong neighborhood opposition and the Planning Commission's approval was appealed to the City Council. Neighbors' concerns were primarily potential traffic and parking impacts from more dwelling units, and how these projects might affect wildfire evacuations within the neighborhoods.

The Laurel Street Garden Cottages project is now fully-constructed and occupied. Commissioners and staff recognize the need to monitor how the increased density and decreased parking work in established neighborhoods. The Commission and staff plan to watch these projects as they develop, reassess the ordinance in light of those observations, and bring any recommended adjustments back to Council. However, we anticipate continued challenges brought on by the high cost of land and low vacancy rates for rental housing. These factors have created a market for different types of housing, which in turn may be perceived as potentially harmful to the character of established neighborhoods.

In addition to the Planning Commission's land use hearing and code amendment activity that I have summarized, there has been significant activity involving Community Development staff and the public which did not involve the Planning Commission or the City Council. In summary, 2020 saw the following activity in the City's Current Planning Division:

- 40** Ministerial Permits: *(Boundary Line Adjustment, Plat Reviews)*
- 39** Tree Removal Permits: *(Street trees & trees on private property)*
- 43** Home Occupation Permits:
- 77** Fence Permits
- 17** Sign Permits:
- 59** Pre-Application Conferences: and
- 38** Administrative Land Use Approvals: *("Type I" decisions)*

In 2020 the City issued permits for a total of 116 residential units, of which 20 were single family homes, 12 were Accessory Residential Units , and 84 were multifamily apartments. The City also saw 3 commercial buildings and 2 mixed use buildings permitted and these buildings are nearing completion. Additionally, the City issued over 700 building permits for additions, tenant improvements, remodels, and "over the counter" permits.

There are several other residential and commercial projects in the pipeline, including significant upgrades to Ashland Schools, as well as 70 new residential units that have received planning approval and are currently in the process of getting building permits. In terms of affordable housing development, 2020-21 promises to be a successful year in that we anticipate 90 new units of affordable housing will be completed.

In addition to all the above staff activity, Planning, Building and Housing staff has been assisting colleagues in the region responding to the Alameda Fire and its impacts to Phoenix and Talent.

Regarding staff, it also needs to be noted that due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Community Development Department has seen the closure of its offices to the public since mid-March and many staff members continue to work remotely.

For 2021, in addition to normal development activity, one item the Commission will be working on with the Housing and Human Services Commission and the City Council is the housing studies and updated housing needs analysis which is required by State Housing Bill 2003 to be completed by June 30, 2021.

Also in the coming year, the Planning Commission is going to continue working diligently on "Middle Housing" strategies which will create new housing opportunities for adaptive reuse of our existing housing stock and use of Ashland's inventory of buildable lands. By drafting code amendments to allow duplexes in single-family neighborhoods, in compliance with recently approved State Housing Bill 2001, the Planning Commission will continue work to accommodate needed housing in innovative and low impact ways.

And to conclude my report, another fallout from the Covid 19 pandemic is that the Planning Commission was unable to hold its annual retreat and field trip in the Spring to discuss and view what has worked and how things could be done better. I am sure the Council is always interested in hearing how things could be done better. If an in person retreat is not possible in the near future, I am going to suggest the Planning Commission hold a zoom retreat to discuss ideas on how a very commendable planning and development process can work even better.

Thank you. That's it for 2020. Let's hope the Chair can report to you in person next year.

Back-Up Info

MONTH	CURRENT PLANNING	LONG RANGE
Dec 2019	<u>459 Russell Dr</u> 13,816 mixed-use/13 d.u.	
Jan 2020	<u>145 N Main St</u> Appeal of T1 approval	Downtown Plaza Space
Feb 2020	<u>945 Tolman Cr Rd</u> 4-lot/3-unit CHD	Open Space Changes SS Affordable Housing SS
Mar 2020	<u>Kestrel Park "Area 3"</u> 16-lot/15-unit NM Cottages	
Apr 2020		Open Space Changes ORD
May 2020	<u>210 Alicia Ave</u> 13-lot/12-unit CHD <u>1511 Hwy 99N</u> 16.87-acre Annexation	Open Space Changes ORD
Jun 2020	<u>210 Alicia Ave</u> 13-lot/12-unit CHD <u>First Place/Plaza East</u> 10,547 s.f. mixed-use/4 d.u. <u>1511 Hwy 99N</u> 16.87-acre Annexation	
Jul 2020	<u>705 Helman St</u> Helman Elementary School <u>1511 Hwy 99N</u> 16.87-acre Annexation	Open Space Changes ORD
Aug 2020	<u>345 Clinton St</u> Appeal of T1 approval	
Sep 2020	<u>345 Clinton St</u> Appeal of T1 approval	
Oct 2020		Middle Housing Rules & Potential ARU Code Changes Affordable Housing ORD
Nov 2020	<u>West Village/Otis St</u> 13-lot/12-unit CHD	

Cottage Housing Projects Since Ordinance Adoption

Laurel Street Garden Cottages (Built & Occupied) – 12 units

657 Oak Street – 4 units

945 Tolman Creek Road – 3 units

Kestrel Area 3* – 15 units in NM-MF not subject to CHD Ord

210 Alicia Avenue – 12 units

Cottages at West Village/Otis St – 12 units