

Public Forum Jessie Kinney

ROGUE ACTION CENTER

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Good evening Ashland Planning Commissioners,

My name is Jessie Kinney and I am field organizer for the Rogue Action Center, a community organization that works on housing issues across the Valley. Over the last 18 months we have knocked over 2,500 doors in Jackson and Josephine Counties to talk with renting families about their housing experiences and needs. We are encouraged to see the proposals moving forward that provide exactly the kinds of housing we need the most in Ashland and across the valley by proven local affordable housing developers like the Jackson County Housing Authority.

This last weekend volunteers went door to door in Snowberry Brook to talk with residents, share with them what is happening, and hear about people's experiences have been in Snowberry Brook. We had a short questionnaire we asked folks to take part in.

When asked:

How has living in Snowberry Brook been helpful to you? And what do you like about it?

We received a variety of answers to include:

- "I like how they look like condos and I've never lived in anything like this."
- "Snowberry has saved my health, I was in a place prior that had mold but couldn't leave, I got my name on the list here and was able to start recovering."
- "It helped by not having to pay more than 50% or more on housing. I can work, not over work, and go to school."

We also asked:

What would you tell city officials if they were trying to decide whether or not to build more housing like Snowberry Brook?

Residents said things like:

- "It is a very nice place and helps out a lot of families in the area."
- "It's a good idea. It would help a lot of people out and the waiting lists won't be as long."
- "We have a lot of people who need affordable housing. Ashland rents are high. People need options to be able to save in order to buy a house."

Lastly, we asked folks:

What would you want other community members who don't think more housing like Snowberry Brook should be built to know?

We heard things like:

- "It's hard to get good housing with your family and this type of housing really helps people out."
- "Because it is not a need for you does not mean it is not a need for others."
- "We are a community of people and everyone needs access to housing. We have to think about everyone."
- "When you provide a way for folks to rise up economically, you create a healthier community because people are able to pursue careers, and education, and then move on. If I wasn't living here, there is no way I'd be able to go back to school."

In a county where nearly 50% of residents rent, and in a city where the fastest growing employment sectors are Retail and Service, which do not pay enough for a household to afford average market rents, any opportunity to create more housing options for individuals and families that live and work here need to be prioritized and incentivized.

Across our region, even as housing development has picked up, apartments and other multifamily units, as well as rental units, have lagged. Single family units tend to get developed at a rate twice that of multi-family units in the City of Ashland, and not all of the newly built multi-family units are rental units.

Ashland is falling short of providing the housing types identified in the 2002 Housing needs analysis: The 2002 HNA found that more single-family units were being built than was estimated to be needed, while both multi-family housing and government assisted housing types were either falling short or not being built at all. It is clear that single-family ownership housing development remains the most prevalent type of housing development within Ashland, while the housing types most needed, including multi-family rentals and government assisted housing are not being developed in accordance with needs.

I encourage you to continue working to find ways to incentivize and support developments that meet the city of Ashland's largest dwelling unit gap, housing affordable to households earning less than \$10,000 annually, where there is already a deficit of 803 units available to those with this very low-income. Thank you for working to remove barriers to needed housing in Ashland. We support these efforts.

Sincerely,



Jessie Kinney
Field Organizer, Rogue Action Center