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August 15, 2012

City of Ashland

To: Members of the Transportation Commission & Staff of City of Ashland
Engineering/Public Works Dept. (via Scott Fleury)

From: Laura Williams, Owner of Home at 307 W. Hersey St., Ashland, OR
Laura Williams

Subject: Request to vacate alley between W. Hersey & Van Ness Ave. (across
from Lori Lane)

I'm writing this to advocate in the strongest possible manner for your approval for our (all the property owners adjacent to the alley, as well as other neighbors) proceeding with our unified efforts to have the alley we reside on closed to all traffic with a fence built at the middle point (allowing me to access my property from W. Hersey only). This would mirror exactly the alley "vacation" in the 1960's, which occurred on the alley intersecting our alley on the North side.

We seek this closure of our alley to regain a greater sense of safety, a healthier environment to live in, and to have better access to the "quiet enjoyment of our property." **We wish to regain and enhance the livability, character and natural environment of our immediate neighborhood; all essential elements of Ashland's stated vision "to retain our small-town character even while we grow..."**

I have owned my home here for 17 years now. When I bought this property, I planted a row of plants to form a hedge to help protect my peace & privacy from living at the edge of the alley. Use of the alley was far less then. My house is small and my bedroom only about six feet from the alley. I can hear & see most everything that goes on in the alley. Unfortunately that now includes regular disturbances from fast, noisy & dusty cars/trucks as well as loud, & sometimes malicious, pedestrians in the alley at all hours of the day and night. All this has definitely affected my ability to get a healthy night's sleep, and to enjoy my home (even with the hedge & fencing, and other efforts).

Posted signs asking people to drive slowly due to dusty conditions, or simply asking folks to use an alternate route, have not deterred or affected the behavior of the few people who use this alley habitually as a shortcut primarily from Lori Lane & the apartment complex on Hersey to Van Ness Ave. (to avoid N. Main in getting Downtown & to the R.R. District) and getting to & from the Minute Market at Skidmore & N. Main. *There might be 20 trips through the alley on an average day, but most of them are by a few cars/trucks.* These people could just as easily use N. Main, or Hersey St. to navigate on more appropriately wide and paved streets. (We anticipate more obnoxious usage of the alley once N. Main traffic is restricted in the new "road diet" unless action is taken. At the least the City should make this alley One-Way from Van Ness to Hersey only - right now!)

Here is a list of some of the problems I've/we've experienced by virtue of the alley being open to vehicular & pedestrian traffic:

Fast, loud, dust producing vehicles & noisy, sometimes malicious, pedestrians at all hours of the day & night – making it problematic getting in & out of our driveways; creating clouds of dust & dirt that cover everything outside & inside; disturbing the peace & quiet of the neighborhood; disrupting healthy sleep cycles; and making it especially dangerous for the pets and young children who live & play on the alley.

Litter (including cases & containers of alcohol stashed behind my hedge) – lots of candy wrappers, alcohol cans/bottles & broken glass too.

Public urination & dog feces left all over.

Graffiti.

Damage & destruction to property (My mature hedge plants on either end were destroyed – one by a car & the other by a person; & cars have destroyed & damaged my fence numerous times).

Illegal parking in the alley.

Trespassing vehicles using my driveway as a turnout to allow another vehicle to pass; or to turn around. (I have since placed a barricade & Private Property sign to try & prevent this.)

Vandalism (My fence gate has been opened; my satellite dish has been disturbed; my neighbor's electrical box has been tampered with; now we have locks on our electrical boxes, & gates.)

Some of the things I've/we've done to address these issues: (with little effect)

- 1) Posted signs.
- 2) Installed motion sensor lighting in driveways. Installed locks.
- 3) Planted hedges & maintained fencing.
- 4) Called police about some property destruction & disturbances.

Positive effects of vacating our alley:

- 1) Resolution of virtually all the above problems.
- 2) A more livable, healthier neighborhood (in accordance with City's vision).
- 3) Higher property values (giving the City more tax revenue).
- 4) No significant effect on the convenience of travel through the area, since there are plenty of sufficiently wide and paved roads nearby.

***A Representative Sample of Some of the Disturbances Referenced Above:
(This does not list all the vehicular & pedestrian trips thru the alley)***

- 6/30/12 (4 am): Loud-talking people in alley; barked back after my dog barked.
- 7/4/12 (2:15 am): Someone singing loudly while walking through alley.
- 7/5/12 (4 am): Pedestrians conversing loudly in alley.
(5:15 pm): Car trespassing in my driveway (turning around).
- 7/7/12 (12:35 am): Truck speeding through alley.
(4 am & 4:30 am): Same truck going back & forth.
- 7/10/12 (4 am): Pedestrian walking loudly through alley.
(7 pm & 9 pm): Several cars speeding through alley.
- 7/15/12 (3:30 am): Loud, fast car drove by.
- 7/17/12 (11:15 am): Two SUVs met in alley & one maneuvered into my driveway to allow the other to pass. A few minutes later a work van sped through, adding more dust! At Noon the UPS truck created lots of dust going through.
- 7/18/12 (9:40 am): Fed Ex truck passing through, creating lots of dust.
- 7/21/12 (2:30 am): Loud, fast car.
- 7/22/12 (6:15 am): Pedestrian clapping hands & talking loudly awoke me.
- 7/23/12 (12:45 pm): SUV & car meet in alley & car pulls into my driveway.
(After this time, I put up a barricade & No Trespassing sign.)
- 7/28/12 (2:30 am): Loud car. (Headlights are always disturbing.)
- 7/29/12 (3:40 am): Loud group of people through alley, then skateboarding as soon as reached pavement on Hersey.
- 7/30/12 (9:30 am): Truck driving backward through the alley.
- 7/31/12 (1 pm – 1:10 pm): Three trucks & two cars had to back up the length of the alley, ignoring the sign indicating its closure (due to ongoing road & utility work, etc. on Hersey).
- 8/3/12 (2:30 am): Group of loud men talking through alley to apartments on Hersey.
- 8/7/12 (2:45 am): Pedestrian walking loudly.

8/7/12 (9:55 am): Speeding brown SUV.

8/10/12 (12:40 am): Group of loud men walking.

8/12/12 (3 – 3:30 am): Loud, drunk man & woman arguing very loudly & continuously for a full half hour; included "Mike" stomping back & forth in the alley.

8/13/12 (11:30 am): Cars passing through even though access is limited by mounds of dirt, construction materials, & signs of closure...

8/15/12 (10:30 am): Fed Ex truck
(11:15 am): Fast white truck & car...

These disturbances (and the many more not captured here) seriously degrade the quality of life in our neighborhood, and extend into our homes, as well as inhibiting the use & quiet enjoyment of our property.

Please allow us to proceed in our efforts to achieve the closure of the alley, so we can enjoy greater health, happiness & well being, and enhance the livability right here. It's not worth sacrificing all that for the dubious convenience of an uncaring few; that's not what livability is about – all of us in the immediate vicinity, those of us who actually live here, agree!

Denying us is also not in the spirit of the City's vision for retaining/creating a livable, small-town character, moving us "toward a less auto-dependent community."

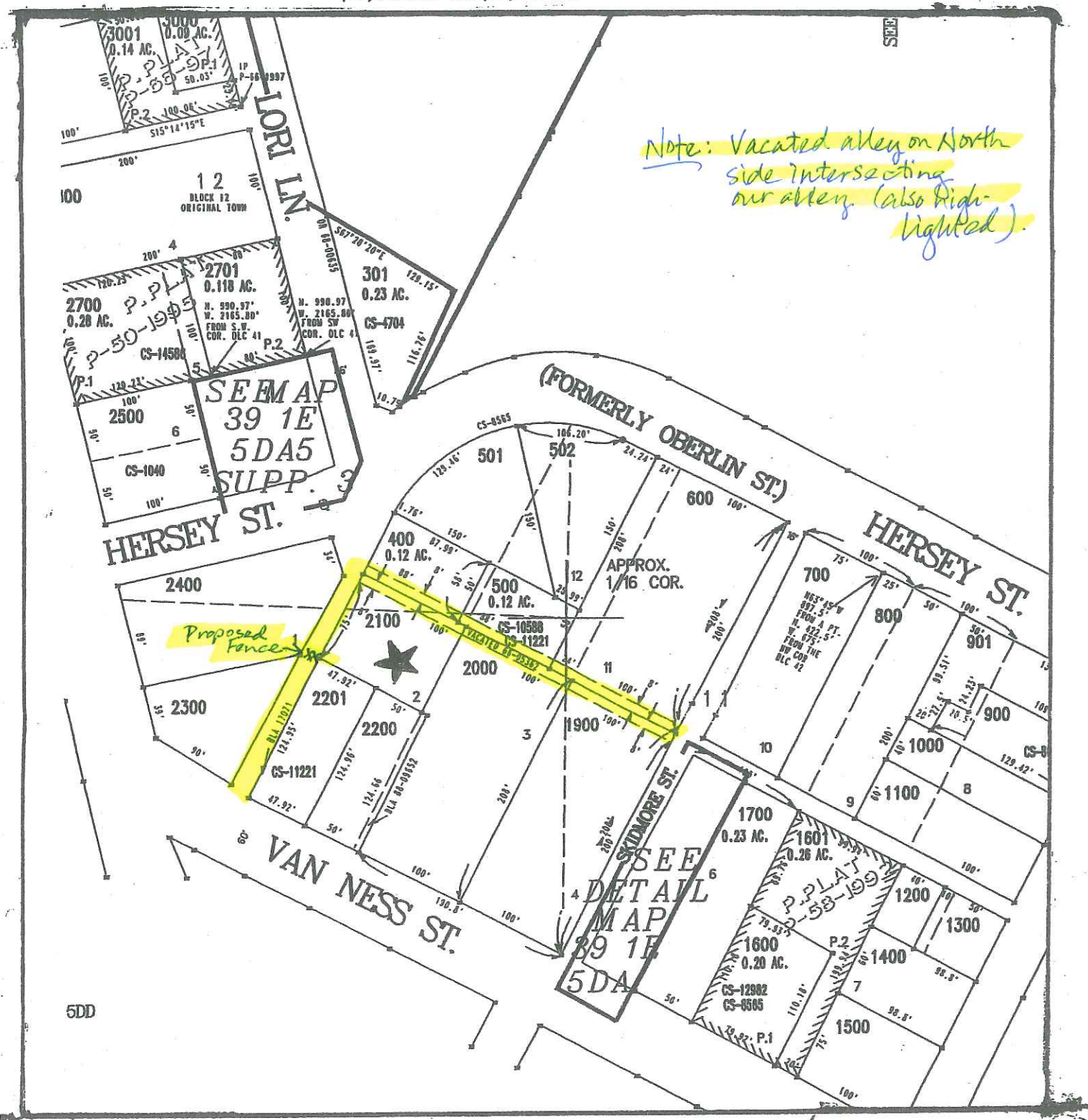
Here is something positive you can do!

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter.



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CRATER TITLE DIVISION

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TOWNSHIP 39 RANGE 1e SECTION 050A

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