

COUNCIL REPORT 12/17/19

Roger Pearce, Chair of Ashland Planning Commission

1) Thanks

- a) To Mayor & Councilors for this opportunity
- b) To fellow Planning Commission members for their work – and special thanks to Melanie Mindlin who recently retired from Commission after over ten years of service as a wonderful and thoughtful colleague.
- c) To Bill Molnar and his staff, who do the heavy lifting on hearing preparation and drafting.

2) What we do?

- a) Recommendations for Legislation. Traditional PC role – hold public hearings, review proposals for legislation (Zoning changes or Comp Plan changes or Annexations) and make a recommendation to the Council for Council decision.
- b) Quasi-Judicial Permit Decisions. Basically any project that requires a public hearing – we hold hearing; apply the facts to the law; adopt written findings of fact and conclusions of law. Not a traditional PC role, but useful b/c we see where the difficulties are in the application of the Code.
- c) Miscellaneous– help staff other City initiatives like the Revitalize Downtown project, we hold study sessions on future projects or future land use changes required by state law.

3) LEGISLATION & PLANNING in 2019

- a) Recommended update to the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- b) Recommended update of the Trails Master Plan – supporting document to the Comp Plan.
- c) Recommended Buildable Lands Inventory update just last month. That's also a supporting document to the Comp Plan.
- d) Worked with ECONorthwest to analyze the Ashland rental housing market and identifying strategies to encourage (at least not DIScourage) rental housing projects. You had a presentation from ECONorthwest on that. That's something we will follow up on this coming year.

- 4) QUASI-JUDICIAL HEARINGS & PERMITS – The big trend in 2019 was HOUSING projects. We approved seven different housing projects various stripes.
- a) One was a small infill development at 158 North Laurel. Adds 4 residential rental units to underutilized.
 - b) Two Significant Single-Family Subdivisions
 - i) Kestrel Parkway. This is one of the last two remaining pieces in the North Mountain Neighborhood Plan. The approval was for 15 SF residences; the applicant will likely submit a second phase in 2020 for about 50 smaller residences – both attached and detached in second phase. The North Mountain Plan is one of City’s planning initiatives that has worked well!
 - ii) Subdivision on a 5.92 acre parcel at end of Randy ST – a few blocks west of Helman School. Approved 23 single family lots; two Open Space Lots; and two large lots likely to be proposed for a future cottage housing development.
 - c) Two Cottage Housing Developments. This is a planning initiative the Council passed a couple of years ago that is working, in the sense that property owners are taking advantage of the Cottage Housing ordinance and producing housing:
 - i) A four-unit cottage housing development at 657 Oak Street.
 - ii) A 12-unit cottage housing development at 476 North Laurel.
 - d) Two Multifamily Rental Projects – larger buildings with multiple units.
 - i) Jackson County Housing Authority’s 60-unit 2nd phase to Snowberry Brook on Clay Street. Council approved on appeal.
 - ii) Lithia & First Ave across from PO. 32,000 SF building w/ underground parking, first floor retail on Lithia, and 34 housing units. OSF is renting all the units for workforce housing, which means that, when the project comes on line, 34 units elsewhere in town that OSF would have rented will come on the market as market-rate rentals.

So lots of housing projects – which is great.

I would personally like to see more traditional MF Market Rate Rental projects and with one- or two-bedrooms.

As the ECONorthwest study you saw earlier this year concluded, there are provisions in the Zoning Code that make that very difficult, and hopefully we can look at modifying some of those in 2020.

But let’s not complain. We had a good year approving housing projects.

1) WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR INBOX IN 2020

- a) Revision of Open Space Standards. We're not really trying to change anything substantive – just eliminate the confusion. The Land Use Ordinance uses the term “open space” in about many instances and many different ways. So we're working on an amendment to clarify the use of that term.
- b) Address the Plaza & Public Space Standards for larger projects Downtown.
- c) House Bill 2001 Compliance. The Legislature has required certain use revisions in Residential Zones. For Ashland, this isn't going to be a big change (in my opinion). It means allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Duplexes in all residential zones, and our Land Use Code is already very liberal in allowing ADUs.
- d) AARP recently featured Ashland in a video about ADUs as one of the country's success stories in permitting ADUs. We currently have over 200 of them.
- e) Working with Bill's staff on a “What's Happening In My Neighborhood” web application. This is a way to get information to the public about projects and proposed projects in an efficient manner.
- f) Developing a video for the script with all the legal disclosures the Chair has to read before each hearing.
- g) FINALLY. We are reviewing a proposed annexation. The proposal is to annex a 16.87 acre parcel just west of town btw Hwy 99 and the railroad ROW. It's inside the Urban Growth Boundary, designated for MF in Comp Plan, and the proposed zoning is Multifamily R2. It's a legislative proposal b/c no specific development proposal is currently being applied for. There are some transportation access issues to address under the annexation criteria. But this could be an opportunity to add a new area of Multifamily-zoned land in the City. That might be in your Inbox next year as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to let you know what we've been up to.
That's all I have unless you have questions, or unless Bill has any comments.