

August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

Ashland Planning Commission & City Planning Staff  
59 Winburn Way  
Ashland, OR 97520

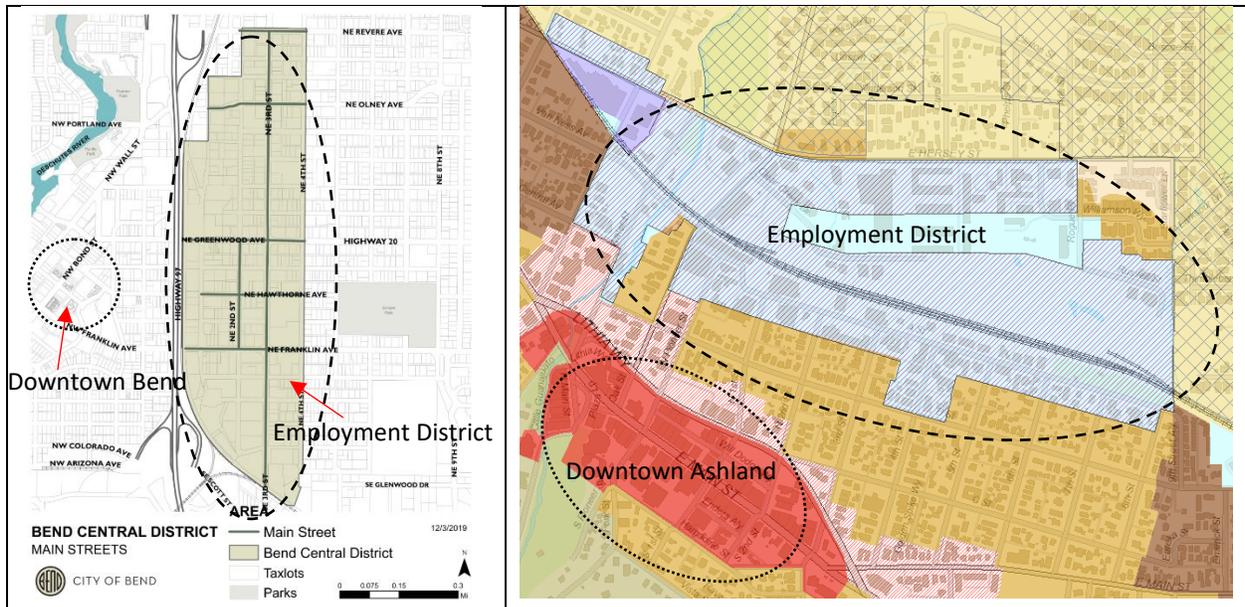
**Subject: Housing in Employment Zones**

I appreciate the efforts by City staff and Scott Fregonese, Fregonese & Associates, in evaluating the City of Ashland's Employment and Commercial lands with the end goal of providing temporary relief in needed housing. The initial seed that sprouted this strategy was rooted in response to the Alameda Fire in an attempt to help citizens quickly find shelter. However, since the Alameda Fire I've come to believe there are numerous reasons why such a code amendment should be considered which include everything from addressing the incredibly short supply of housing to preparing for the ever changing dynamics of commercial real estate caused by e-commerce and now a pandemic.

The study session on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 was informative in that statistically the City does have an adequate supply of employment and commercial lands based on past and projected growth trends. As such, the concept of "temporarily" utilizing a portion of these lands to provide much needed housing opportunities makes logical and timely sense.

In response to the conversation on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, I wanted to illuminate on three key points:

**1) Bend, Oregon:** I was relieved to find out during the study session from Mr. Fregonese the City of Bend, in 2020 had adopted a similar provision in their code called "Commercial-Ready Space" for not only under achieving employment/commercial areas less than ½ mile (10 minute walk) from their downtown core, but also recognizing there are underutilized housing opportunities which essentially parallel my thoughts for the areas surrounding the Ashland Railroad property (*generally areas between tracks and Heresy Street and Laurel Street to Russel Drive*). The inserted zoning maps below of both Bend and Ashland best illustrate the proximity of employment lands to each's Downtown where it's a short walk to services, retail, restaurants and the heart of the city where street life vibrancy is key.



***½ mile or 10 minute walk to Downtown Bend/Ashland from Employment Zone***

*The City of Bend's Findings of Fact, approved unanimously by both the Planning Commission and City Council, can be reviewed at:*

<https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/45911/637196164298070000>

**2) History:** This topic is not new to the City of Ashland as Mr. Fregonese pointed out during his presentation. Ashland has always been at the forefront of progressive land use planning and adopted similar codes in 1997 with the North Mountain Neighborhood Master Plan which allows for 100% ground floor residential space within the commercial center (NM-C) as long as the building(s) are “*designed and constructed in a way that allows a simple transition to commercial use* (AMC 18.3.5.100 B.1.)”. As a City Planner at that time, the intent was that the ground floor spaces would eventually be converted to commercial space once market demand dictated. This code provision in 1997 has been very successful and has resulted in 56 residential units on 1.3 acres of land (43 du/acre).



**Note:** The above photo is of a 29 unit residential “apartment” building on the corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and North Mountain Avenue. The building is currently under construction, but without the flexibility of the NM-C code allowing interim ground floor residential use, the apartment building would NOT have been possible due to financing restrictions relating to commercial/office space which is currently being viewed by the financing industry as an *excessive risk* due to a variety of factors such as e-commerce, outsourcing, big box retail, and the predictions that video conferencing will remain a viable business strategy long after Covid-19 and thus will result in a large surplus in office/retail space.

Further, during the 2018 adoption of the *Pedestrian Places and Transit Triangle Overlay along Ashland Street*, the standard language in the zoning code was “flipped” where the 65%/35% code language was flipped to 35%/65% of the ground floor commercial to residential space ratio. At the time, it was unanimously recognized by the Planning Commission and City Council that demand for commercial space was quickly waning and that if the community desired “missing middle” or smaller housing units on the second and third floors of mixed-use buildings, the ground floor ratios needed to be revised in order to facilitate the goal.

**3) Not in the Downtown:** I do not believe this special code provision, if adopted, should be considered in the Downtown Ashland area, but instead only within commercial/employment areas that are in close *walking* distance to it. Nor should it be considered in

commercial/employment lands that are too far from the Downtown core such as the Croman Mill area. It's my opinion, either of these two extremes would cause unintended consequences for the Downtown by losing the "feel" of a traditional Main Street such as "activated" storefronts, variety of retail uses, sidewalk activity and dining – if ground floor storefronts "lose their transparency" due to residential use (i.e., blinds/curtains/tinted glass, etc.). And, if allowed too far from the Downtown core, the end intent to provide affordable and moderate priced rental housing becomes negated by suburban sprawl conditions relating to auto dependency for services and/or the creation of alternative service destinations competing with Downtown businesses.

By only including such a code provision in areas that are only within walking distance to the Downtown core, it allows service workers and others to live and work via a close walk to work and obtain needed services which in turn keeps sidewalks, restaurants and store fronts activated.

In conclusion, I believe Ashland's Downtown is the key component for everything else we love about Ashland. It's the economic engine and the catalyst for everything else. It's not broken by any means, but I do believe our world is changing dramatically and quickly so periodically evaluating and acting to maintain the health of the engine while simultaneously providing much needed affordable rental housing to the community is critical.

Sincerely,

Mark Knox  
KDA Homes, LLC  
[knox@mind.net](mailto:knox@mind.net)  
541-821-3752

August 23, 2021.

Ashland Planning Commission

From: Robert Kendrick, Kendrick Enterprise LLC for Casita Developments LLC

Re: Amendments to Chapter 18.5.8

Dear Planning Commission Members

In 1986 I completed Grand Terrace I, pictured below, in Long Beach California consisting of 156 apartments, over parking, and 10,000 square feet mixed commercial frontage of retail and commercial office. The prior use of the property was a grocery store, but abandoned, left a cluttered empty lot with garbage, and couches.



<https://www.grandterraceonline.com>

Across the street was a junk yard, and on the side streets old warehouses, co-mingled with single family homes and a mix of other housing uses. 57 apartments called fountain creek were built over the junk yard, after first demolishing and cleaning the property. 124 apartments more all with underground parking were placed where the warehouses once stood.

Over the past 40 years another 1 million square feet of residential and commercial projects was developed by Kendrick. In Ashland, Pro Bono, Kendrick managed the development and funds for SOU Science & Arts Center, and its new Library, and the New and remodeled Ashland Library, The Grove, and the Child Advocacy Center in Medford.

The plaza at the Science & Arts center was dedicated to Kendrick for the work done in the community.



Grand Terrace II is in Ashland's urban growth zone and is a much more advanced development than forty years ago. Last year the project was approved after seven years of governmental process and a cost to us of hundreds of thousands of dollars only to be reversed through an appeal by one person named Craig Anderson. Anderson used an entity named Rogue Advocates, a nonprofit whose mission is "to preserve productive rural lands" and working forest land and solicits donations for this endeavor but doesn't mention it uses the money to stop housing developments.

The Grand Terrace site has no irrigation water and is not a working farm and has several acres of forested land which will be preserved as open space but these facts are not disclosed. There is no mention that the city is under an emergency housing crisis, and its adjacent neighborhoods, where most of all the city's essential workers live, have lost their homes and our local business owners can't find any help because many prospective employees have had to move away since no rentals were available. Let's remember, over 2,500 households burned down, or over 5,000 people had their shelter taken away. Craig Anderson/Rogue Advocates have been calloused and malicious to all these people in need. When we talk of social equity and equality, the actions of Craig Anderson exemplify what we who seek social justice housing are speaking to and what we mean when we call someone a privileged person. There is no equality or social equity, only anger, self-righteous lies, and attacks on anyone associated with advocating housing opportunities for citizens in need. Anderson is a disgruntled person who resorts to lies, innuendo, misinformation, distortion of facts and who constantly calls out developers by saying they are stealing from the city and making millions of dollars. In the real world we call this a voice of a jealous loser. Mr. Anderson hasn't given anything to the community. I have, here and everywhere I work and live.

I built the first Grand Terrace and all the other apartments because I knew the community. I know this community. The general stock of apartments is very old and the rents extremely high and I know we can do better. I first started building units that were smaller than what was on the market because I had built every other type. But I had to make costs balance with the rent people could afford and save money at the same time. High standard of livability is always emphasized while at the same time guaranteeing amenities, good design and appeal always makes the apartments a hit. I've carried this concept throughout all my developments, and they are successfully accepted and so will Ashland's Grand Terrace.

Today, we are in a housing and environmental crisis! Housing is a right and equitable element to society and to all members of the Ashland community. Over the last twelve years the city of Ashland has stood up a meager 70 apartments, but the houses that were built were in the hundreds and still counting. Today houses cost over a half million dollars. There is no equity or environmental contributions to any of this. There is no justice to the members of the community, when nearly 50% of the population can't afford to live here and their children can't afford to stay here.

Last year the Planning Commission took a courageous move and approved Grand Terrace and since then, Kendrick Enterprise has worked closely with ODOT and has tentative approval for a crosswalk at North Main St where two bus stops are located which go north and south. This is only a four-minute walk from the Grand Terrace development entry where we will be installing another bus stop. A traffic study is also underway, and we hope we can achieve the desired speed reduction that we all want. I trust in ODOT and their professionals, and all the work they do. The road diet ODOT installed and those installed nationwide have reduced injuries and incidents an average 47-64%! In the last two decades, Ashland has experienced regrettably, one fatality. We can applaud our planners for this safe planning. We can design for safety, but not the behavior of humans.

Grand Terrace is a multi-modal development that is going to make our planet cleaner, house those that are rent burdened, homeless, and those who are deprived from finding affordable shelter.

Grand Terrace is committed to providing housing and the 30 affordable units as required under the annexation ordinance, but we will be going beyond these requirements and will allocate land to hold 54 affordable units in lieu of only 30 if a nonprofit developer takes up the offer of the land to build them. We believe a nonprofit would have the ability to offer even lower rents than a for profit developer can. This is fair and opens more opportunities to those most in need. Our team will develop the remainder for work force affordability. It's imperative to the community this development is completed sooner rather than later. We hope you can help us make this happen.

Thank you  
Robert Kendrick  
Grand Terrace Development