

April 10, 2019
Salem Planning Department
% Olivia Glantz, Planner III

Dear Salem Planning Department,

I am glad to have this opportunity to provide a practical perspective on the adverse effects and impacts that will affect my home, property and private access should the Wren Heights subdivision be approved as proposed.

I will also attempt to comment on the significance this development will have on my surrounding neighborhood, its current qualities and character, along with the potential environmental consequences on vegetation, stormwater management, erosion control, soil and hillside stabilization, wildlife corridor protection, public safety, lighting, traffic, and transportation; issues that if not carefully considered and mitigated, could prove contrary to planning and community development goals and objectives, or worse, could prove permanently detrimental to the environment and its natural systems, especially sensitive wildlife habitat.

As a lifelong Salem resident, a current Salem Hospital nurse, mother of 4 and grandmother of 6, I consider myself grounded, intelligent, practical and patient.

I have lived at this residence nearly 28 years, and have witnessed many local development projects that I have not opposed.

Furthermore, I do not object to growth done well, but feel I am compelled to object to this one because of specific concerns.

I believe it is our mutual goal to preserve and enhance the quality of the existing residential character with good planning and development, made even greater through community input. Communication is a process and I believe in honest, transparent discussions and consensus.

It was disconcerting to be contacted by the developer, Thomas Kay Jr, insistent that I correct an easement that has existed since 1955. I felt pressured by several texts and emails from this developer to pay for my private access issue.

Now, not only was I concerned about the environment, wildlife, noise, safety, and development compatibility in my backyard, but apparently this development has reached my front yard as well.

I will focus my public input however, on the greater issues, as follows:

1. Wildlife - There are families of deer that fawn near my lot, in the close proximity of Lot #5. "Does" bring their fawns morning and evening to graze on my back lawn and return to Lot #5 to hide in the bramble.

My concerns are that this herd of very vulnerable wildlife be allowed a corridor for fawning and safe passage without harassment or impedance. This would likely require a special biological

study to determine if Lot #5 is an important, strategic, safe and perennial habitat for birthing and the natural rearing of fawns.

2. Traffic - Your traffic study and analysis indicates ingress and egress is within safe parameters.

I don't agree with your conclusions.

Instead, I believe that you are now creating a shortcut for once separate neighborhoods and for additional motorists to now access Salem Heights Avenue and utilize the traffic light at the Liberty Road, to then continue straight through to wholly inadequate, poor visibility intersections through a mixed use neighborhood to access Commercial Street.

I have traveled this route at various times of the day. There is a dance school that can be very congested with students being picked up by parents causing great concern of parked cars and darting children.

I highly recommend that the Planning Department request a second Traffic Study to review the impacts of more than the initial circulation estimates that fall short of determining the traffic load of additional neighborhoods accessing Salem Heights Avenue to reach both Liberty and Commercial Streets.

3. Pedestrian and Bicycling - I realize that reaching a perfect balance to promote all modes of transportation can be difficult. Salem Heights Avenue is a long, straight, fast moving stretch of road where Wren Heights subdivision will be placed.

What concerns me are the pedestrians, now and in the future, walking along narrow dirt shoulders of the road, including and especially children.

It's highly unrealistic that road improvements along the Wren Heights subdivision will be enough to ensure safety for pedestrians when they are in fact needing to walk the entirety on Salem Heights Avenue.

I would recommend the Planning Department create a Transportation Impact Mitigation Fee specifically to assist the City of Salem in making future improvements to Salem Heights Avenue.

4. Natural Environment, Vegetation and Stormwater Management -

As a prime objective, for any development, I would expect that not only the critical examinations and studies show positive improvements before being approved by the City, but that they also protect the essential characteristics of residential environments, including and especially the natural environment.

While it may be easier for a developer to remove large trees in order to position homes within setbacks and according to plans, there runs a great risk not only for view shed but the character and ecology of the community.

As I mentioned previously, wildlife is dependent upon proper habitat for survival. The topography and foliage along much of the perimeter of this project is a critically important buffer for wildlife wherein to travel, hide, nest, birth and forage.

I do not believe the City has invested enough attention and analysis into the potential impacts on

wildlife .

I recommend a study by the Oregon State Fish and Wildlife Department to determine the short and long term effects on wildlife and to make recommendations on vegetation retention, access to water and food, wildlife buffer zones and migration to address the maximum benefit for wildlife.

I also believe that beyond the effects on wildlife, tree and vegetation removal will have adverse effects on water quality, stormwater management, pollutant loads, and erosion control.

The topography next to and near my property is steep and what retains soil currently are large trees and dense vegetation.

Vegetation is a natural erosion mitigating component of up-slope runoff. There is a great potential for the proposed water quality improvements to fail when extreme climate conditions occur.

5. Public Safety - Salem Heights Avenue, as I have mentioned, is a long and downsloping avenue to a stop at Liberty Road stoplight. Vehicles travel at high speed even with pedestrians walking along a narrow dirt shoulder. There is a sign in place already, put there by concerned parents and neighbors, asking motorists to please drive as if their own children lived there.

Adding vehicle trips to already hazardous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians is not how I think Salem wants to grow.

This kind of scenario, I believe, is contrary to the overall promotion of multi-modal transportation, not to mention the additional risk placed on children and families who are already concerned.

The City of Salem could co-contract with Wren Heights subdivision to conduct a study as part of impact mitigation and better determine improvements needed beyond the construction site but where this subdivision and the new traffic generated will negatively impact the public safety of Salem Heights Avenue travelers.

6. Development Compatibility - I recognize that the housing type and density of the Wren Heights subdivision plan integrates and transitions well enough with the surrounding built environment, and I want to assume that the mutual goals of the planners and developer are to reduce impacts on the adjacent neighborhoods by providing proper setbacks, screening, vegetation, erosion control, lighting and landscaping that complements our Salem Heights Avenue community.

I would ask that the Planning Department please take considerable time assessing the lighting design and proposed vegetation removal plans. What was once a lot filled with trees and vegetation will now become 3 dozen, potentially brightly illuminated residences bordered by street lights. Because my home is above this subdivision, I look out over most of what will soon be entirely rooftops and exterior lighting.

There are many communities, cities and counties that have adopted exterior lighting ordinances that not only preserve the night sky for all to enjoy, but enhance and complement their surroundings with less invasion on others' evenings.

7. Noise - I have mentioned already that as a 28-year resident at this location I have seen many changes, including construction happening around my home. Because my home is on the hill, construction sounds carry. In fact, all sounds will carry to the surrounding homes; barking dogs, vehicles, and activities of backyard social events. I realize the peace and repose to which I am accustomed having an orchard as a neighbor will dramatically change.

What I ask of the developer and his contractors to be as good neighbors and to please adhere to the noise abatement regulations. This will be an extended period of construction and disruption. I hope this transition be with sensitivity to minimizing the disturbance that will affect the quality of life for myself and adjacent neighbors.

In conclusion, I realize that planners and developers are accustomed to and well versed in professional responses to the standard issued "Not in My Back Yard" complaints. I strive somehow, to stand out in this crowd, to compel upon you that developers and contractors have the luxury of presenting favorable economic arguments in favor of their projects while adjacent neighbors seem smaller and less significant.

I am counting on the City of Salem to focus on the common good and to provide a sense of confidence that our interests and comments are indeed heard and requests are facilitated.

It is ultimately the City, it's elected and appointed officials, working with recommendations by the planning staff, who make the final decisions on projects, amendments and appeals.

I encourage you to seek the greatest degree of oversight to assure that natural systems, wildlife, water quality, erosion control, minimum tree vegetation removal, noise abatement, lighting, development compatibility and public safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists are carefully studied with qualified input.

I truly appreciate your efforts on my behalf and appreciate this chance to offer what I hope is additional insight for creating a project Salem can be proud of.

Sincerely,

Peggy Taylor

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