

## Olivia Glantz

---

**From:** Bill Dixon <bill.r.dixon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 21, 2019 6:39 PM  
**To:** Olivia Glantz  
**Subject:** Testimony re Case #SUB-ADJ19-02, Wren Heights

**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Bill Dixon, 608 Salem Heights Ave. S., Salem, 97302  
**Subject:** Case #SUB-ADJ19-02, Wren Heights

The City Council should reject the application to develop Wren Heights, a 34-lot housing subdivision on Salem Heights Avenue South. The application relies on a flawed premise: that Salem Heights will serve as the main road into and out of this project. Following that logic will impose unnecessary risk on the residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

Salem Heights currently serves a wooded community of approximately 150 residences. The Wren Heights development would add about 345 car trips a day to the road, increasing vehicle traffic by about 20 percent. Unfortunately, as the city's staff acknowledges, Salem Heights cannot safely serve its current traffic, let alone more.

Salem Heights fails the safety test in almost every way possible. It is too narrow – only 10 feet wide in each direction, barely more than the width of a school bus and its mirrors. There are no sidewalks, only a dirt shoulder that in places is less than 2 feet wide. There is neither a bike lane nor a safe place to ride, neither on the street nor on the shoulder. There are no curbs or gutters to channel rainfall away from the road. The street is hilly, and sight lines are limited.

Salem Heights is risky enough for motorists, but it is a special risk for children and those who with physical or mental limitations. The street serves children attending Salem Heights and Candalaria Elementary Schools, along with a group home and a growing elderly population. Those factors should give the Council pause about approving this development.

(Please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kw4LeFuemxQ> for a video tour of the street.)

City staff says the lack of safety on Salem Heights should not be a problem because Salem Heights is listed in the city transportation plan as a collector street. The fact is that Salem Heights not only does not meet the city standard for a collector street, it doesn't even meet the standard for a local street. The "collector" listing is little better than an administrative fiction, and the best the city can say is that the street will be brought up to standard sometime in the next 25 years.

Staff also says that Wren Heights will improve safety on Salem Heights because the developer will widen the street and add a sidewalk, bike lane, curb and gutter along the southern boundary of the project. This safety claim is debatable – improving 10 percent of a dangerous road doesn't make the rest of it safe and in fact may make it more dangerous as motorists speed through the improved area.

The lack of safety violates a core principle of Salem governance: That public infrastructure should be adequate to serve current requirements as well as new development. The Council should acknowledge that Salem Heights violates this principle and deny the Wren Heights application.

Following that action, the developer and city staff should be encouraged to work together with the Salem Heights community to find an approach that will work for everyone. This new effort should involve a continuation of the recently initiated city effort to improve Salem Heights for all users and protect the character of the neighborhood.

Safety and community development should proceed hand-in-hand. Wren Heights is an opportunity for the City Council to find that balance.

--

*Bill Dixon*

[bill.r.dixon@gmail.com](mailto:bill.r.dixon@gmail.com)

503-602-1708