

GRANT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SALEM

OREGON

June 17, 2020

Mayor & City Council
City of Salem
555 Liberty Street SE
Salem, Oregon

Re: **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
HOME GRANT
905 & 925 COTTAGE STREET NE**

Mr. Mayor and City Councilors ,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2020–2024 action plan for the community development block grant program and the HOME grant portion of the Community Development Block Grant cycle. I write as the Land Use Chair of the Grant Neighborhood Association, which has taken a very active interest in one of the proposed projects in this year's action plan.

The 2020-24 Action Plan includes a grant of approximately \$472,000 to underwrite the purchase and conversion of a historic church building and single-family home at 905 and 925 Cottage Street NE into multifamily apartments and a business office.

This project, which proposes to add 14 units of housing, relies on a comprehensive plan change and rezoning of 0.20 acres of single-family housing (RS) to Commercial Office zoning. The rezoning of this property would also facilitate the developer converting the existing single-family home into a commercial office.

The Commercial Office Zone is wholly incompatible with the vicinity of the property, which lies in the middle of a 150-acre contiguous tract of developed, stable residential housing.

The Grant Neighborhood Association has actively engaged in this proposal to rezone 905/925 Cottage St NE as Commercial Office since it was notified to the public at the beginning of May. We have attended the developer's open house, we have met with the developer via Zoom and invited them to our Neighborhood Association meeting to have them explain the project. We formed a subcommittee to meet with them further and concentrate the efforts of the Association.

We have provided them detailed comments about the project, asked them many questions about the need to rezone the property, and offered them our interpretation of the Grant Neighborhood Plan.

We have asked them many times why Commercial Office is necessary for this project and the answer remains the same: they need an office included “to make it pencil.” The stated primary purpose of this office is to lobby the legislature on behalf of the organization.

Despite these transparent and cordial interactions, the plan proposed by the developers has not meaningfully changed. At our last Neighborhood Association meeting, on June 4, the association voted unanimously to oppose the rezoning proposal on the table.

The specifics of this project, which are not included in the action plan the public was asked to comment on, include the following:

- A comprehensive plan/map change and a rezoning of two buildings with a rich history as a church and parsonage from single family (RS) zone to Commercial Office;
- A neighborhood plan, adopted as Council Policy, which does not allow for the rezoning of the RS zone within the Grant Neighborhood for more intense uses such as Commercial Office;
- An immediate vicinity of properties whose economic, social, and demographic characteristics have not meaningfully changed since the adoption of the comprehensive plan and do not warrant rezoning the subject properties;
- The first residential neighborhood north of Downtown Salem, which depends on protection of its residential core from commercial properties chipping away at its character,
- Rezoning and development north of D Street into the residential core that would only encourage further development that is contrary to the wishes of the neighborhood, the Neighborhood Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and to Council Policy.

The Grant Neighborhood Association is not opposed to the kind of development contemplated by this project. A walk through our neighborhood of the properly-zoned parcels shows that there is ample opportunity for the city and developers to bring positive development to our neighborhood. The Neighborhood Association has actively supported other dense multifamily developments in existing commercial office zoning, including one (1795 Fairgrounds Rd NE) at the very same meeting where we voted to oppose this project.

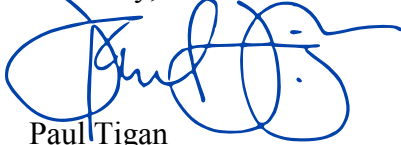
The Neighborhood Association is asking two things of the Mayor and Councilors as you consider the CDBG grants on Monday, June 22. Our first is that you do not approve the funding of the 905/925 Cottage Street project with CDBG/HOME funds. There are certainly many worthy projects deserving of this funding that will not require a speculative rezoning and redevelopment of vibrant, historic properties contrary to the recommendation of the Neighborhood Association.

Should you choose to approve the CDBG Action Plan without any changes, the Grant Neighborhood Association asks you this second. Please do not allow your decision tonight to fund the acquisition of this property to unduly influence your decision whether or not to

re-zone the property. It is the intention of the Grant Neighborhood Association to contest and appeal any decision to approve this zone change. The boundary of D Street is as meaningful as anything to the character of our neighborhood and we will advocate for it strongly before the Planning Commission and Council, if need be.

We do not want to see the City become over-invested in a project through the awarding of this grant, and then not able to make a clear determination on the question of whether this zone is appropriate.

Sincerely,



Paul Tigan
Land Use Chair
paultigan@gmail.com

CC: Eric Bradfield, co-chair
ebradfield@gmail.com

Sam Skillern, co-chair
sam@salem1f.org

Jeanne Boatwright, secretary
cjboat835@yahoo.com