

Aaron Panko

From: Kate Fuller <kl.fuller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 30, 2021 1:21 PM
To: Aaron Panko
Cc: geoffreyjames@comcast.net
Subject: Subdivision Case No. SUB21-09: The White Oaks at Meyer Farm, Morningside, Salem

Dear Mr. Panko:

This is to urge you to make sure and certain that the city takes extreme care in reviewing and approving plans to develop precious open space at the site of the old Meyer Farm in the Morningside neighborhood (Subdivision Case No. SUB21-09). Of paramount concern from our personal point of view, which we know is shared by many in our neighborhood, is the fate of the many **White Oaks** that grow on that property.

The proposed plan shows some 70% of those trees will be removed. This is unacceptable. It's that plain and simple: unacceptable.

First, these trees have many admirers and defenders in this city, and are trumpeted by promoters of the city as special attractions to visitors. Many of Salem's old, venerated White Oaks were damaged, some fatally, in the ice storm of last winter. White Oaks are rare enough in our region to deserve extremely careful consideration and every effort possible to preserve and protect them. Now, only 1 % of the original forest of Willamette Valley survive, owing to destructive human activities. It's a sad thing but true that to developers and to many in city government, any tree that's in the way of "progress" is just a junk tree. Not true of the White Oaks. They are iconic and have value far, far beyond the commercial. Please, read on.

First, consider **Salem's previous mistakes** regarding stands of White Oaks. For example, remember the recent debacle of the Costco oak removal: Statesman Journal: Jul 7, 2021 — Despite the **developer's promise** to safely transplant the trees, advocates argue the move has likely **killed a grove of historic white oak ...**"

The city has sacrificed **venerable oaks** to "development" before, and it's ALWAYS a blow to the beating heart of this metropolis and a blow to the civic pride and loyalty of the city's citizens. It is ALWAYS a mistake. This is why:

"Older [White Oak] trees are very sensitive to construction disturbances. The deep tap root can make transplanting difficult. ... Old oaks on upland sites can be troubled by sudden competition from and excessive irrigation of newly planted lawns. Their root zones must be respected for them to remain

healthy." [<https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?ItemID=883>]

You can't just say, We'll leave a few and build around them or We'll transplant them and all will be well. It won't.

We strongly urge you to find out more about oaks before you pass judgement on whether these ones live or die.

For the moment, please ask yourself: Why are these oaks of special value and concern? Here are some answers:

"While they aren't commonly found in nurseries due to their **slow rate of growth**, White Oaks are **prized landscaped specimens** for the shape of their wide-spreading branches. The **slow-growing** trees are also **long-lived, with specimens surviving for hundreds of years.**" [<https://sciencing.com/white-oak-trees-6521703.html>]

It's imperative that you take great care before you decide to demolish this kind of precious, august life.

Moreover, **evaluating these trees must go far beyond dollars and cents:**

"Trees promote health and social well-being by removing air pollution, reducing stress, encouraging physical activity, and promoting social ties and community. Children with views of trees are more likely to succeed in school. Trees promote a strong economy and can provide numerous resources to the people that need them. While cities are getting hotter, trees can reduce urban temperatures. They provide habitat and food for animals. Finally, trees are valuable green infrastructure to manage storm water. Money spent on urban forestry has a high return on investment."

[<https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ppp3.39>, added emphasis] In addition, and critically important, trees are a crucial carbon sink during this era of climate change.

Can you justify killing these trees in terms of dollars? No. "An oak tree in a timber sale can be worth anywhere from **15 cents a board foot for pallet material quality up to \$1.20 per board foot for high quality logs.**" [<https://chilcoteforester.com/>] These trees can live to be 300 years old. Would you really want to see them destroyed for chickenfeed money?

The value to Salem of these living oaks in this open space cannot be exaggerated.

Recent research has broadened and intensified our understanding of the critical importance of oaks -- these White Oaks -- to the world around them, of which we are only a part. This article will elucidate the broader and deeper view, and we urge you to read it: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/home-and-garden/ct-life-1223-garden-morton-20181210-story.html>

In addition to their complex ecological roles, their astonishing beauty, and their amazingly long lives, White Oaks feed the creatures who live near them and strongly affect and nourish the very soil where they live: "A wide array of birds including turkeys, pheasants, grackles, woodpeckers, jays, thrushes and nuthatches depend on them in the fall for nutrition....Populations of some species fluctuate in proportion to the amount of white oak acorns available each year." [<https://sciencing.com/white-oak-trees-6521703.html>]

Other citizens will write asking you to consider the huge traffic problems and the wasteful ruination of precious open space that will result from this project if it proceeds, and we add our voices to theirs on those matters. This is a dastardly and ill-conceived plan that should be completely rescinded and reworked before the city takes action on it. Preserve as much open space as possible - it's at a premium. It only takes a drive around town to see what could have been beautiful lakes and ponds whose shores have been completely ruined by the city's poor planning and selling out to commercial interests. Those mistakes are irremediable and remain forever reprehensible.

We strongly urge you to pay attention to the neighborhood voices you will hear from about this proposed development. It's a bad idea as presently conceived. You are in a position to shape the future of this corner of the city, for the better or for a disgraceful worse. Please be careful, be informed, and be resistant to bad influences. We're all counting on you.

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