



MEMORANDUM

To: Brandon Pike, Salem Planning
From: Ben Schonberger, AICP
Date: May 9, 2022
Re: **Neighbor Comment Response Memo**
(case file SPR-ADJ-DAP-DR 22-24 and SUB-TRV 22-05)

The following memo is a response to neighbor comments received by Salem Planning for the above referenced cases, a subdivision and housing development at 5205 Battle Creek Road SE. The comments address issues related to all the land use actions associated with the development: subdivision, site plan review, adjustments, design review, and tree variance.

Responses

In all, nine individuals and two public entities responded with written comment on a variety of topics. The applicant previously held a productive meeting with the South Gateway neighborhood association on December 9, 2021, at which approximately 25 people attended. Given that the subject property comprises 15 acres and its first phase incorporates 10 buildings and 184 dwelling units, the quantity of written responses is less than the applicant would have anticipated. Listed in alphabetical order, individuals commenting were:

- Avery
- Carr
- Chambers
- Heyko
- Leckie
- Lee
- Nania
- Roisen
- Swiderski

Two public entities also sent comment letters: Cherriots and the Salem School District.

The applicant appreciates those comments in support of the proposal within some of the letters and sees no need to respond specifically to these points. Because many letters have the same points of opposition, this response will be organized by issue, rather than responding to each letter individually.

1. Opposition to Housing

Several comment letters express generalized opposition to the development of this property for housing, or object to multi-story buildings. The Salem Comprehensive Plan and city zoning encourages development of exactly the kind of multi-family housing that the applicant has proposed. This entire subdivision site is zoned RM-II, “Multiple Family Residential II,” an intense land use designation relative to other zones. In fact, zoning requires more housing on the site as a *minimum* (12 units per acre) than surrounding single dwelling neighborhoods have under existing conditions. Creating housing opportunities, especially for low-income people, requires construction on vacant sites like this one where it is most suitable.

Residents of the proposed housing will be a mix of elderly people and families, contrary to the implication in some comments that only the surrounding area is a family neighborhood. The proposed residential use is allowed in the zone, and development proposed is consistent with city dimensional and design standards.

2. Open Space Loss

Several letters express a sense of loss for the wildlife habitat and open space on the current site, which is 15 acres and currently undeveloped. The site is not a public open space. The site is private property and zoned by the City of Salem for multi-family housing. There are no inventoried natural resources on or near the site that are protected by city regulations.

As shown on the site plan and landscape plans for the development on Lot 1, a large park will be incorporated into the development. This park prioritizes the use of native plant species which support small wildlife such as birds and bees. In addition, landscaping on the site incorporates a community and learning garden for the benefit of the people who live there. While new development is a change from the site’s current and historic status, the housing and park on Lot 1 is well-designed, integrates with the existing area, and complies with all city standards.

3. Traffic/Parking Impacts

Concern is expressed in some of the letters about increased traffic due to new development. New housing creates additional traffic. However, the proposed subdivision and phase 1 development is designed with multiple points of access out to the surrounding area, robust pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and connections to the existing street system coordinated with city engineers. A transportation study from DKS Associates was submitted with application materials that assessed trip generation, site access, internal circulation, bicycle and pedestrian needs, and parking. That study found that all city standards were met, and that the public street system is adequate to handle the impacts from the proposed development.

Likewise, parking standards set by the Salem zoning code are satisfied, and the quantity of off-street spaces is anticipated to be sufficient to absorb demand. Any spillover of parked cars

is likely to occur on public streets internal to the subdivision, not on neighborhood streets farther away from the development.

4. Tree Removal

The applicant has requested removal of seven significant trees from the site as part of its application for the subdivision and Lot 1. The site has been designed to save several large Oregon white oaks. Nevertheless, removal of some trees is justified because they are located in or near right of way for streets the city requires, or they are too close to proposed buildings or paving. Design alternatives for saving these trees were considered, and only the minimum number of trees necessary to allow development were proposed for removal. Infrastructure demands and development requirements led to a request for a tree variance to allow removal of several trees, which is the most effective regulatory relief for these practical difficulties. More details, including a tree-by-tree breakdown of those requested for removal, is in the tree variance request included with the application.

5. Bus Stops

Cherriots identified two locations for future bus stops on Battle Creek Road in the vicinity of the site at the Eastlake Drive intersection. One of the stops is on the opposite side of Battle Creek from the site, and the other is southeast of the property. Neither of these stops abut the proposed development site. Moreover, the location of proposed stops is within public right of way. Placing new transit stops at the identified locations requires direct coordination between the transit agency and the city public works department, outside of any involvement by the applicant.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond. We look forward to a decision.