

Jefferson Westside Neighbors

A City-Chartered Neighborhood Association
www.jwneugene.org

August 26, 2013

Eugene Mayor and City Council
125 E. 8th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Mayor Piercy and Councilors:

I recently received the following e-mail from a Planning Division staff member:

From: Heather.MODonnell@ci.eugene.or.us
To: Chair@jwneugene.org>
Subject: former naval reserve site

Hello Mr. Heider,

As the chair of Jefferson Westside Neighbors, I wanted to let you know about some up-coming focus on the former Naval Reserve site on 13th. As you may know, this site was identified in the Envision Eugene March 2012 recommendation document as a site to re-designate the Metro Plan designation from Government & Education to Medium Density Residential. The city owns the site and is interested in working with an affordable housing developer in the future, and this site was also identified as a potential opportunity site for housing through the neighborhood's opportunity siting analysis. The Metro Plan re-designation would also include an automatic re-designation of the site in the Jefferson Far West Refinement Plan as well as rezoning the site from PL Public Land to R-2 Medium Density Residential. City staff are working on finalizing the analysis of all the sites that will be re-designated to help accommodate more jobs and homes inside the UGB, which could mean a public hearing to consider re-designation/rezoning being held as early as mid-September.

Just wanted to let you know before the formal process starts and see if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Thank you for your time,

Heather O'Donnell
Associate Planner | City of Eugene Planning

In response, I'm writing you because the issues raised in this e-mail go well beyond the Jefferson Westside Neighbors and the disposition of the former Naval Reserve site; and these issues should be addressed by our elected officials, not just by staff.

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First let me affirm that the JWN members and Executive Board have made clear, well before any staff action, that we support and hope for a “best outcome” for this site that accomplishes the following objectives:

1. Results in development that is a positive contribution to the livability and diversity of the JWN.
2. Demonstrates a “model” process for community-driven planning that furthers neighborhood and Eugene goals.
3. Models a successful “opportunity siting” process that results in medium- or high-density residential development, based on neighborhood community values.
4. Supports affordable housing (including subsidized housing) that is attractive to families.

The JWN Executive Board has considered the future of this site and, consistent with Statewide Planning Goal One and the Envision Eugene “Neighborhood Livability” pillar, we firmly believe a community-based process to amend the *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan* designation and policies applicable to this site is the appropriate way to plan future development that meets the objectives stated above.

This particular site has enormous potential for demonstrating the best of planning processes that genuinely involve the community’s stakeholders, including the surrounding residents of apartments and single-family homes; the students, parents and faculty of Caesar Chavez Elementary School; members of the nearby Faith Center and Unitarian Universalist congregations; and proprietors of nearby businesses.

If conducted properly, the planning process for this site can provide an example to other Eugene neighborhoods that the implementation of Envision Eugene, particularly plans to increase density, will be based on robust and meaningful involvement of the neighborhood organization and affected residents, community organizations and businesses.

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To provide background on this issue, I requested former JWN Chair, Paul Conte, to provide a concise review of some of the history regarding planning for this site. His review is attached for your consideration.

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JWN Executive Board's Prior Direction

On January 17, 2012, the JWN Executive Board unanimously approved a motion to proceed with development of a conceptual plan for future use of the Naval Reserve site, as described in the attached document. This plan proposes a “planning team” based largely on the organizational structure of the planning teams that developed the two refinement plans in the JWN. The JWN Executive Board specifically identified the development of intergenerational, family-friendly, partially- or fully-subsidized housing as a priority objective.

JWN Executive Board's Position

After due consideration, the JWN Executive Board approved the following motion at its August 20, 2013 meeting:

“The Jefferson Westside Neighbors Executive Board supports initiation of a community-based process to recommend amendments to the Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan designation and policies applicable to the former Naval Reserve site on West 13th Avenue.

The Executive Board reaffirms its prior direction that development of intergenerational, family-friendly, partially- or fully-subsidized housing be a priority objective.

The Executive Board firmly opposes any redesignation of the site without a community-based process to recommend plan amendments consistent with the values of the neighborhood community.”

Proposed Next Steps

On behalf of the JWN members I am respectfully requesting that City Council ask the City Manager to have Planning Division staff coordinate with the JWN Executive Board on a process to produce a recommendation for amendments to the *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan* regarding the former Naval Reserve site.

This request is consistent with the responsibility that the NORP assigns to neighborhood organizations for developing proposals for neighborhood plans. Section 2(a) states:

“With the assistance of professional staff, subject to their availability, the neighborhood organization may develop neighborhood plans and proposals with respect to land use, zoning, parks, open space and recreation, annexation, housing, community facilities, transportation and traffic, public safety, sanitation, and other activities and public services which affect their neighborhoods.”

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The JWN Executive Board appreciates that City staff may not be available to serve as the lead professional staff on this project because of their current workload; so the board is prepared to engage a certified professional planner to assist community members in producing a recommendation and draft findings to be presented to the Planning Commission for their subsequent review and recommendation to City Council.

We're prepared to kick off the process with our JWN General Meeting on September 10 and to produce a recommendation without undue delay.

I'm also respectfully requesting that the City not proceed with redesignating or rezoning the former Naval Reserve site until there has been an adequate community process that involves the JWN organization.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Stephen Heider, Chair
Jefferson Westside Neighbors
Chair@jwneugene.org

CC: Jon Ruiz, City Manager
Eugene Planning Commission
Carolyn Burke, Interim Planning Director

ATTACHMENT

Brief Recap of History Related to Former Naval Reserve Site

Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan

City Council adopted the *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan* on January 12, 1983. The plan states that it is “intended to provide ... policy direction for public decisions made affecting the area.” A significant change to the intended use for such a large site as the former Naval Reserve site should be addressed through a meaningful community process to amend not only the land use designation for the site, but also more specific refinement plan policies as to its future use. The “Plan Evaluation and Update Process,” described on page 55 of the refinement plan, clearly anticipates that the neighborhood organization will be involved in any significant updates to the plan.

The Role of the Neighborhood Organization

Council Resolution No. 3746 established Eugene’s Neighborhood Organization Recognition Policy (NORP). Under Section 2(e), “Function and Responsibilities of Neighborhood Organizations,” the NORP states:

“Neighborhood organizations shall continue the planning process by reevaluating the goals, objectives, and recommendations contained within the neighborhood [refinement] plan.”

In adopting the NORP, City Council gave explicit (although not exclusive) responsibility to the neighborhood organization encompassing a refinement plan area to reevaluate the plan and recommend amendments.

This role of the neighborhood organization is an essential way that Eugene implements Statewide Planning Goal 1 – Citizen Involvement, which requires jurisdictions

“To develop a citizen involvement program that insures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process.”

Under requirement C.4, “Implementation of Goal 1,” the City must ensure that:

“The general public, through the local citizen involvement programs, should have the opportunity to participate in the development, adoption, and application of legislation that is needed to carry out a comprehensive land-use plan.”

Thus, conducting a community-based process to amend the *Metro Plan* and *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan* designations and policies applicable to the Naval Reserve site is not only consistent with the plans’ own provisions for evaluation and updates, but also conforms with Statewide Planning Goals.

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Opportunity Siting

In summer of 2008, the JWN organized a two-session “Opportunity Siting Workshop” that was well-attended by JWN members. (It’s worth noting that no other neighborhood organization was willing to hold such a workshop at the time.)

At this workshop, participants identified numerous “potential” Opportunity Siting locations, including the former Naval Reserve site. The explicit understanding of workshop participants was that any site ultimately identified as an “Opportunity Site” would be able to be developed at medium- or high-density levels, but *only through a review process in which neighborhood stakeholders were involved in the decision to approve a development proposal.*

Subsequent to this workshop, the JWN made repeated requests to Planning Division staff to participate in a demonstration Opportunity Siting approval process. Unfortunately, Planning Division staff rejected these requests and made no further attempt to involve the JWN in any discussions of the Naval Reserve site as an “Opportunity Site.” (When the Planning Commission learned of the JWN’s interest and lack of staff response, commissioners urged staff to follow-up on “site specific” options under Opportunity Siting. However, staff had not approached the JWN regarding Opportunity Siting until the recent e-mail to the JWN Chair.)

Envision Eugene March 2012 Recommendation

Staff’s e-mail to the JWN Chair may give the impression that there has been a prior “identification” of this site for redesignation to “Medium Density Residential.” However, there was never any *community* discussion leading to the mere *two sentences* related to the Naval Reserve site in the March 2012 recommendation.

The Agenda Item Summary (AIS) for the Council’s March 14, 2012 work session made no mention of this item, and the minutes for that work session do not indicate any mention of this item or that councilors made any comments supporting such an action. The only reference to this item in other council meeting minutes is a statement by Councilor Brown at the May 30, 2012 work session that he wanted to “strike the provision.” In essence, this item has not been examined or endorsed by the community, and is only now being brought up for serious consideration.

Envision Eugene “Neighborhood Livability” Pillar

On page 2-15 of the Envision Eugene Draft Proposal, March 14, 2012, under the “pillar” to “Protect, Repair and Enhance Neighborhood Livability,” the first strategy states:

1. *Minimum and maximum allowable densities in the land use code will not be changed in order to meet our residential land need for Envision Eugene. Future actions (such as land use code changes and plan amendments) that impact allowable density in neighborhoods will only be undertaken through a public process (such as area planning or neighborhood planning) that integrates the compatibility goals of the Infill Compatibility Standards (ICS) and/or Opportunity Siting projects.*

Amending the *Metro Plan* and *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan* designations and rezoning the property to allow medium-density residential development would clearly be within the scope of this promise to residents, and the City has accordingly made a commitment to meaningfully engage the community in planning the future of this important site. (The current designation and zoning don’t allow residential development at all.)

DRAFT Conceptual Plan

For Future Use of the “Naval Armory” Site

Approved unanimously (6-0) by JWN Executive Board January 17, 2012

Purposes

This document is a “plan for a plan.” It provides a conceptual plan for a process to develop a specific use plan for the old “Naval Armory” Site which is located in approximately the 1500 block between W. 13th and 14th Avenues.

Context

The site is approximately 3.06 acres of flat, vacant land and lies entirely within the Jefferson Westside Neighborhood. The lot is designated “Government and Education in the ***Metro Plan*** and “Public Facilities and Open Space” in the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan***. The lot is zoned “public land.” The Army Reserve (?) facility is to the west of the site. The Springtree Apartment complex is across W. 13th Ave. to the north. The Eugene Faith Center’s parking lot is to the east. Caesar Chevaz Elementary School and ball fields are across W. 14th Ave. to the south.

Ultimate deliverables and action items

The conceptual plan describes an organizational structure and process that will produce the following:

- Amendments to the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan*** to establish appropriate plan designation, policies, goals, objectives and implementation priorities for future use of the site
- Amendment(s) to the ***Metro Plan*** to establish appropriate plan designation and other plan elements consistent with the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan***
- A zone change to a zone that’s consistent with the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan***
- Adoption of these plan amendments and zone change by City Council
- Initiation of implementation actions consistent with the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan***

Immediate deliverables and action items

- A “Planning Team Organization Structure, Scope and Process” document
- Adoption of the “Planning Team Organization Structure, Scope and Process” document by City Council
- Nominees for Planning Team members
- Appointment of Planning Team members by City Council or the Planning Commission.

Process concepts

- The JWN Executive Board will develop a proposed “Planning Team Organization Structure, Scope and Process” document, based largely on the organizational structure of the planning teams that developed the two refinement plans in the JWN (i.e., the ***Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan*** and the ***Westside Neighborhood Plan***). The process will be based on standard rules for the democratic conduct of committees.
- The JWN Executive Board will identify the development of intergenerational, family-friendly, partially- or fully-subsidized housing as a priority objective in the scope of the Planning Team. The Planning Team’s final recommendation for use(s), however, will not be limited to this objective.
- The board’s proposal will be voted on at a JWN general meeting and presented to City Council.