

June 1, 2014

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

When the time comes for you to vote on the redesignation and rezoning of the former Naval Reserve site, you'll choose between two alternative paths.

The two paths are equally likely to result in a future development project to build medium-density, subsidized housing.

Both paths will also result in tallying additional capacity for multifamily housing under the Envision Eugene buildable lands analysis.

But the two paths are starkly different.

One alternative is the path that the **Jefferson Westside Neighbors** Executive Board and members have been working on for over two years, and which has been endorsed by Richard Herman, Executive Director of Cornerstone Community Housing.

This path represents striving for our best outcomes, through community engagement and collaboration. To put it in more concrete terms, this path will lead to another community success like **Willakenzie Crossing**, which was showcased at the recent Neighborhoods USA conference.

The other path reflects Planning staff's worst fears that empowering the neighborhood community early in this process would mean that staff no longer had total control over the outcome. No matter how it's "pitched" to councilors, this path ultimately runs roughshod over the affected community residents and organizations.

As explained in the letter and JWN motion that you received from Stephen Heider, the JWN supports redesignating the property to Medium Density Residential, rezoning it to R-2 (multifamily) and using the site for subsidized housing. In fact, we adopted that position well before staff added the site to the Envision Eugene process and proposed exactly the same actions. (See the attached "Concept Plan" that the board adopted in January 2012.)

We've also walked the site with Richard Herman to share our hopes and learn from his experience how best to proceed so that the community welcomes families who would live in affordable housing on the site. Richard summed it up pretty well in his letter to the Planning Commission (which is attached):

Metro knows that engaging Neighborhoods in developing affordable housing encourages a sense of ownership. ... I would encourage the [City] to leverage the commitment and interest of the Jefferson Westside Neighbors ... in creating a quality development."

As Stephen Heider has explained in previous letters to the Council, the most effective way to realize our best outcomes is through a community-based, collaborative planning process to present you with recommendations for policy and implementation additions to the *Jefferson/Far West Refinement Plan*, which encompasses the site. This approach also reflects the true spirit of Statewide Planning Goal 1 -- Community Involvement; as well as the Envision Eugene commitment that Council made to a neighborhood planning process before increasing density in established neighborhoods.

For reasons we don't understand, however, Planning staff and several planning commissioners feel compelled to thwart this constructive approach.

Staff has said the process would be "too expensive" -- but we have offered to pay the entire cost of a qualified, professional planner to staff the project.

Staff has also said working through the refinement plan "isn't necessary." As recently as last Thursday in *The Register-Guard*, staff said that community members' "concerns would be addressed at the time of development." That kind of thinking is a sure recipe for community conflict, as the debacle of the "Bascomb Village" process demonstrated. The time to engage the community over future development that could have a major impact on livability is now, not when construction bids are being solicited.

Staff has also suggested that planning for the site's future needs to involve the "whole community, not just the neighborhood." That's a red herring and a slap at the neighborhood, since neighborhood refinement plans and "planning teams" are enshrined in statutes and city code as the appropriate way to develop initial recommendations which then go through an extensive, city-wide review, recommendation and adoption process involving the entire Planning Commission and City Council.\

The JWN made a good-faith effort by developing a draft process and submitting it to the Planning Commission for vetting and revision before they made a recommendation to Council. But commissioners who oppose any JWN involvement successfully blocked even the slightest consideration of our proposal.

What's most puzzling -- and disturbing -- is how staff's position (and that of several planning commissioners) seems to disrespect what they tout as the "community vision" in Envision Eugene. Being a part of planning for the future of our own neighborhoods is central to the true "community vision"; and by working against that principle, staff is making it ever more difficult for the Council to garner broad community support when Council faces the major decisions on the UGB, density and other issues.

This really shouldn't be a hard decision for councilors. For our part, our sleeves are rolled up, our interest is in collaborating to realize our best outcomes and our hope is that you will grant us that opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tom Happy, Vice Chair
Jefferson Westside Neighbors