

To: Oregon City Planning Commission and City Planning Commission
From: Robert J. Zimmer, Ph.D.; member of Project Advisory Team,
Oregon City Equitable Housing Project
Date: August 17, 2018
Re: Feedback on Equitable Housing Project Recommendations

In June 2016, I made a major investment in Oregon City by purchasing Mt. Pleasant, a 68 space manufactured housing community. It was in terrible condition because the previous owners at one time were in the process of closing the park, in order to redevelop it for single-family, detached housing, i.e. "highest and best use". At its nadir, the park was half empty and in a state of serious disrepair causing unsafe living conditions for the residents.

To date, I have invested over \$400,000 in improvements including repairing and sealing the streets, installing 13 exterior light poles with boring for 6 poles, repairing walkways, landscaping the entrance and installing new mailboxes, with overhead cedar shelters. With these improvements, residents are beginning to show real pride of ownership by remodeling and cleaning up their own homes.

As a park owner with 16 years' experience in manufactured housing, I was invited to join the Project Advisory Team (PAT) of the Oregon City Equitable Housing Project lead by Pete Walter. Having read the report, I support fully the proposed zoning code changes to promote more equitable housing options to current and prospective residents. I think the recommended code and regulatory changes are fair, reasonable, practical and creative solutions to a very complex, multidimensional, burgeoning problem.

Though I have owned and managed apartments in California for forty years, I will focus my suggestions on manufactured housing parks, which provide the most affordable home ownership options. Prospective buyers can purchase a 3 bedroom, 2 bath resale home with carport and shed for \$60,000-\$80,000 in Oregon City. With monthly space rent under \$600, utilities about \$100, and low vehicle tax rate versus property tax rate, home ownership is comparatively cheap and affordable. The problem is that they sell quickly because of the dearth of homes available on the market, i.e. demand far exceeds supply.

With a total inventory of approximately 1,000 manufactured homes in Oregon City, the supply is extremely tight, and all parks are at full capacity. There is no available space in Oregon City to place a newly purchased home unless an existing house is demolished.

The solution is to encourage developers to build more manufactured housing communities in Oregon City. Three specific recommendations pertaining to manufactured homes are:

1. Stipulate in the report that manufactured home communities are permitted in R-2 High Density Zones, if they meet design standards.
2. Remove square footage requirements so as to allow “tiny homes” or park models with less than a 400’ square footprint.
3. Allow manufactured homes to be included as another option for cluster housing. (Cumberland MHP is a 7 space park in S.E. Portland.)

My last recommendation deals with warming shelters or transitional housing. As part of their mission, churches and other not-for-profit organizations are doing an amazing job assisting individuals and families who are struggling in their daily lives. Increasing shelter capacity and allowing shelters to operate year round is imperative. Also, Southern California shelters open up their doors when the “wind-chill” temperature hits 32 degrees.

To achieve increased development of affordable housing units for current and future Oregon City residents requires the Oregon City Planning Commission to approve the creative, compassionate and pragmatic changes recommended in the Project Advisory Team’s report. Crises demand bold leadership at the highest levels, and affordable housing in Oregon City is a crisis.