



January 14, 2019

Mayor Dan Holladay &
City Commissioners
625 Center Street
Oregon City, OR 97045

Rick Givens
Planning Consultant
18680 Sunblaze Dr.
Oregon City, Oregon 97045

Dear Mayor Holladay and City Commissioners:

I regret that I am out of town and unable to attend Wednesday's hearing to offer my testimony in person. I am writing on behalf of my client, Icon Construction & Development, LLC, to request that the Commission consider our concerns relating to OCMC 17.21, & 17.22. These chapters establish design standards for single-family residential development in the Park Place and South End Concept Plan areas, respectively. Although no changes to these chapters have been proposed by staff, we think that since they are included in the code amendment package currently under consideration, this is the appropriate time to address concerns about the impact of these design standards on development that will occur within these neighborhoods. We believe that many of the standards are unduly onerous and costly, and that they therefore conflict with the spirit of the primary issue before the Commission of providing for equitable housing in Oregon City. The standards for both chapters are very similar and can be considered together.

These two chapters require that new single-family construction within the Park Place and South End Concept Plan areas conform to a series of design standards that exceed the already stringent requirements for single-family construction elsewhere in the city. In particular, they require:

- Adhering to historic plan designs only (Vernacular, Bungalow, Foursquare, Queen Anne) unless a Type II land use decision is approved.
- Front porches on all units.
- A second walkway from the street to the entry.
- Additional design elements above/beyond what's already required
- Recessed windows.
- Garages that, if attached, cannot face the street (the code only allows no garages, rear/side load or detached).

With respect to the architectural style standards, these chapters dictate specific historic styles of architecture that are desired by very few prospective purchasers. These standards only allow future home builders the opportunity to adapt to market demand for other styles of homes if they apply for and receive approval through a Type II land use application. These applications are expensive and time consuming. Further, the code provides no criteria for approval of such applications. These standards will have a tremendous impact on the marketability of future homes in these areas.

Icon has had experience in trying to market vernacular homes in Oregon City. The McCarver Landing subdivision off of Warner-Parrot Road was conditioned to require the construction of five vernacular style homes around the Mathew McCarver home. Upon completion, these homes

were not sought after by home purchasers and proved to be extremely difficult to market. Other homes that Icon constructed within this same development, that did not have the same design requirements/restrictions, had no issues with marketability because they were built per the demands/needs of future homebuyers. The vernacular homes were simply not desired.

The design details sections of these chapters require costly design modifications that must respond to standards for porches, roof pitch and massing, entry design, exterior materials choices and unusual window designs. All of these factors are expensive and time consuming to respond to and will not result in homes that are better suited to the needs of future Oregon City residents. They will certainly not help in achieving more equitable housing as they are certain to raise the cost of housing in these two areas of the City that contain the majority of the remaining vacant land supply.

The standards relating to garage design in the Park Place Concept Plan area are particularly concerning. Section 17.21.090(A) states that, "Garages must be detached, side entry or rear entry. For side entry garages: the garage area shall not be located in front of the living area." Home buyers do not want detached garages. Side entry garages are only practical on corner lots because the density planned for these neighborhoods results in narrow lots that do not work with side loaded garage designs. Alley designs for rear access homes are costly, do not work on hillside areas, and result in home configurations that do not provide for significant usable back yard areas that are so desirable to home buyers. The garage standards for the South End Concept Plan area found in Section 17.22.090 do not mandate the use of detached, side or rear entry garages. Similar language should be applied in the Park Place neighborhood.

For all of the reasons outlined above, we request that the Commission delete these two chapters entirely. We believe that the design standards presently contained in the City's Low Density chapters provide ample assurance that quality design is provided in our neighborhoods. However, if the City wishes to adopt new chapters for the Park Place and South End Concept Plan areas, they should be rewritten to provide much greater flexibility of design and given new consideration by the Planning Commission, with opportunity for more public input. We want to provide neighborhoods that are attractive and responsive to the desires of prospective homebuyers. These chapters, as written, are counterproductive to that goal.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Givens

CC: Mark Handris