CITY OF
ASHLAND

Memo

Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group 8/21/2014

TO: Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group

FROM: Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner
Brandon.Goldman@ashland.or.us

RE: Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan
Mobility Framework Discussion.

Summary

The site has been considered as an integrated system where each framework element (Housing/Land Use, Greenway & Openspace, Infrastructurte, and Transportation/Mobility) is intended to support every other. The placement of streets was very directly influenced by the natural function of wetlands and creeks and was designed to support the full range of intended housing choices.
The vehicular circulation system proposed by the plan for the Normal Neighborhood will connect to the existing street network. The Normal Neighborhood street network was designed with the following principles in mind:

- Streets throughout the Normal Neighborhood Plan are connected into modified grid networks which provide multiple available routes for a given trips, and will reduce travel demand on the adjacent east-west boulevards: East Main Street and Ashland Street. Connections from the Normal Neighborhood will extend to the east to Clay Street by way of Creek Drive and other future street connections.
- Walkability is supported by small blocks. The City's street standards recommend that, where possible, block lengths be a maximum of 300 to 400 feet with a maximum perimeter of 1,200 to 1,600 feet to provide good connectivity for all modes of travel. The fabric of blocks in the Normal Neighborhood Plan were designed to these standards however some variations from these target block lengths have been proposed in order to protect natural resources.

Background

In addition to the broad design objectives stated above the development of the mobility framework for the Normal Neighborhood Plan area complies with a number of objectives and operating assumptions:

- Street design and street types are consistent with existing adopted City Standards.
- Pedestrian and multi-use paths are integrated into the transportation system.
- Natural features are to be preserved:

  - The number and extent of creek crossings and encroachment into riparian areas and wetland buffer areas should be minimized while still aiming to maintain street connectivity.
  - Shared Streets, a new street type presented in the adopted Transportation System Plan, could be located adjacent to Cemetery Creek to minimize pavement in proximity of the water protection zones.
- Establish block lengths of 300- 400 ft, with exceptions as needed to address preservation of natural features and in consideration of topography.
- The Normal Avenue neighborhood's internal street network has largely been designed to keep travel speeds in the range of 20 mph and minimize cut-through traffic by introducing elements such as small traffic circles, terminating vistas, and subtle changes in direction at block intersections.
- Streets or multiuse paths are to be located adjacent to natural features so that visual and physical access to the natural features is preserved and to incorporate these open spaces as neighborhood defining characteristics.
- Streets are aligned to provide for maximizing building solar orientation and shading opportunities, consistent with the City's Land Use Code.
- Future road placement should align with existing property lines where feasible.
- Preserve existing building when locating future streets.
  - All existing residences excepting a single residence in the south east portion of the project area (see bullet below), would be preserved by the street network presented.
  - The proposed road leading to the Wingspread mobile home park would necessitate the removal of the existing home as proposed. In this particular case the property owner has indicated to the City that upon future development of their property it is their intention to remove the existing house in favor of more efficient development.
- Ensure innovative alternative designs by allowing a process that permits flexibility in the final location of future streets, alleys and paths.
  - The general location of future roads and paths is addressed by the Normal Neighborhood Plan Street Network Map, however design and engineering at the time of the actual development will determine their precise locations.
  - In relation to the transportation network the proposed code language stipulates that shifting the location of streets, alleys or paths more than 50 feet would be considered a minor amendment. Elimination of any such facility would require a major plan amendment.
- The backbone of the street network is a re-routed neighborhood collector that extends from the southern intersection at a future improved Rail Road Crossing, to East Main Street between Clay Creek and Cemetery Creek. Given the anticipated traffic volumes on this new road being approximately 1000 average daily trips it is not necessary that it be classified as an "Avenue" but rather a "Neighborhood Collector" designation would suffice. Neighborhood Collectors are

expected to accommodate 1500 to 5000 vehicle trips per day and as such this lesser classification would adequately accommodate expected use.

- The proposed Street Network includes designations for streets within the plan area that are to be developed as "green streets" designed to capture and treat storm water in consideration of the area's existing hydrology and best practices for storm water management consistent witht eh City's Storm Water Management Plan.
- The Normal Neighborhood plan introduces a street type that was recently included in the Transportation System Plan: the "shared street".
    - A shared street is a very low speed street (15mph maximum) where all of the functions of the transportation system coexist in the same space. There are no individual sidewalks separated from the street surface by curbs and planted medians. There are no bicycle lanes separated from the street by painted lines.
    - The low volumes, low-speeds, narrow cross-section, and traffic calming design elements make it possible for all users safely occupy the street surface by yielding to the slowest and most vulnerable present at a given moment.
    - Within the plan area Shared Streets have the flexibility to alternatively develop as alleys or multiuse paths as appropriate to service a proposed development.
- The use of rear lane alleys will support a complete grid of finely-grained urban blocks. These alleys will provide the primary access to garages and backyards.
    - The specific alley locations within the designated blocks is left to future development site design considerations, subject to the maximum block length and parking access standards. As such those potential alley locations most subject to adjustment are not included in the Street Network map but it is expected that future development will provide alleys to meet access management and connectivity standards.

Traffic Studies

An Existing Traffic Conditions memo and a Future Traffic Analysis report were completed by Parametrix Engineering and SCJ Alliance Engineering as part of this project to specifically analyze traffic impacts projected at full build-out of the area. The report found that all existing intersections in vicinity of the project have the needed capacity to accommodate future projected traffic following development of the Normal Neighborhood. The report recommended that East Main Street should be improved to comply with existing City standards:

> *With development of the Normal Avenue Neighborhood Plan, it is anticipated that urban scale improvements would be made to E. Main Street [two 11-foot travel lanes, two 6-foot bike lanes (or a 6-foot shoulder along the north side of the street), a 5 to 8-foot planting strip on the south side of the street to buffer the sidewalk from vehicular traffic, and a 6 to 10-foot sidewalk, also along the south side of the street]. These changes would improve the multimodal LOS analysis results for E. Main Street for bicycle and pedestrian facilities to excellent.*

The Future Traffic Report also noted that although the proposed rail road crossing is not imperative to accommodate vehicular traffic to and from the neighborhood as it could be accommodated via East Main Street it would provide multimodal benefits.

> *While not necessary as a traffic mitigation measure for potential project impacts along E. Main Street or elsewhere, provision of a public crossing of the CORP rail line would benefit the neighborhood by providing an alternative multimodal route to a variety of destinations throughout the City and should be considered over the long-term. When such a crossing is installed, traffic volumes at the intersection of Normal and Ashland Streets should be monitored to determine when signalization of this location is warranted.*

Planning Commission recommendations

The Planning Commission report dated 4/22/2014 recommended the following in relating to the transportation system:

> *The Planning Commission has specific recommendations relating to the timing of transportation improvements associated with the future development of the plan area. In order to address current and future transportation along to East Main Street, the Commission recommends the mobility chapter of the Normal Neighborhood Plan Framework Document be amended to reflect the following:*
>
> - *The south side of East Main Street, from Walker Avenue to Clay Street, should be fully improved to City Street Standards prior to, or coinciding with any future annexation and development within the plan area.*
> - *A future transit stop coordinated with the Rogue Valley Transportation District, in the immediate vicinity of the NN-03 Land Use Zone, should be incorporated into the East Main Street roadway design and development.*
> - *That prior to annexation and development within the plan area the following items relating to the future Railroad crossing at Normal Avenue be addressed:*
>   - *That the proposed public Rail Road crossing can be installed without necessitating the closure of any existing public crossing within the City.*
>   - *A financing plan be developed and approved by the City for the future improvement of the rail road crossing.*

Transportation Commission Recommendations

The Transportation Commission took public testimony, reviewed the traffic studies noted above, over the course of three meetings (September 26, October 24, and November 14, 2013). Upon review of the materials provided and deliberation the Transportation Commission approved a motion (3-2) to recommend elimination of two of proposed new street connections to East Main Street, leaving only the new Normal Neighborhood Collector connection in its proposed location, thereby recommending elimination of two of the three intersections as proposed in the draft plan. Prior to this motion the Commission was split with a 3-3 motion to approve the transportation element of the plan as proposed.

The Transportation Commission also discussed the issue of needed facility improvements to East Main Street (i.e. curb, gutter, bike lanes, sidewalks) and voiced concern over the cost and timing of such improvements. East Main Street is presently improved to County standards and the Commission stated that ultimately this road needs to be upgraded to meet the City's Avenue standard.

ATTACHMENTS:

Traffic Analysis

- Existing Traffic Conditions completed by Parametrix Engineering 9/5/2012
  (http://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/Draft%20Normal%20Ave%20Ex%20Traffic%20Report.pdf)
- Future Traffic Analysis completed by SCJ Alliance 11/19/2013
  (http://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/20141119_Final%20Normal%20Ave%20Future%20Traffic%20Report.pdf)

  The above reports are large technical documents and are attached as links only – printed copies available upon request

Letters

- Vidmar letter dated 7/29/2014
- DeMarinis letter dated 8/6/2014

MINUTES FOR THE NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
Thursday, July 24, 2014
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

Pam Marsh called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way.

Mayor Stromberg, Michael Morris, Michael Dawkins, Rich Kaplan, and Bill Molnar were present.

Chair Marsh gave overview of why the agenda for this meeting was different than was discussed at the end of the last meeting, due to scheduling challenges.

1. Consent Agenda
Morris/Stromberg M/S to approve the minutes as presented. Voice Vote; all ayes. Motion passes.

2. Discussion items
Molnar gave presentation on how the current greenway/open space plan came about. The natural areas are pivotal to this location and so need to be integrated into the plan. Paths were chosen as part of the plan in order to allow for interaction with the natural environment. He explained how the term, "conservation area" is from the current Comprehensive Plan, but staff do realize that we might need to reconsider using this term as the areas in question may be used for alternative uses (gardens, open space, parks, etc.)

Molnar explained that the wetlands as shown on the plan were determined by state statutes. They are not necessarily 100% accurate as property owners needed to give the state permission to access their land, and not all did. He noted that Ashland a very high percentage of property owners who did give permission for access. They looked at both the floodplain corridor and the riparian setbacks and picked the wider of the two, when establishing the current plan.

Molnar explained the process for how the wetlands boundary can be altered, using either minor amendments or major amendments. The group discussed the importance of the wetlands, as more than just a wetland – they are conservation and wildlife corridors.

The group discussed density and how changes to the current density may occur based on the wetland areas on each property. Group discussed density bonuses and their use for protecting or enhancing conservation areas. How a smaller amount of wetland than currently determined can be restored to a higher level in order for a builder to transfer some of that space into space for building. Group discussed changing the language of the plan from "conservation area" to "open space" or "community space". They would like to match it to already in-use definitions.

Mayor Stromberg discussed the possibility of using "performance standards" option in creating this plan.

Marsh reminded the group that the delineation of wetlands/conservation space is 25% of the area of this plan, when a typical project only has 5% - and this higher amount does not include any of the un-developed parts of each home lot.

Group discussed transportation elements which cross and/or involve the conservation corridors. Molnar reminded the group that transportation goals and natural area goals tend to be in conflict with one another. Local communities have the ability to mitigate other areas of the natural corridor

for streets which cross the wetlands. The challenge in this plan is that nearly any east-west street is going to encounter a conservation area.

The group discussed how this is the first plan since the riparian ordinance was put into place and what challenges that brings about as well as how it makes this plan different than plans of similar neighborhoods.

3. Public Input

Randy Jones: has property in the plan and has done a wetlands delineation with the State. He gave a copy to the community development department and wants it taken into consideration. He doesn't agree with the current delineation. States that there is no naturally occurring stream in the area, it is all storm water, run-off from the city, and "lose" TID water. If those were diverted or controlled the wetlands would shrink.

Jan Vidmar: her current house would never have been built under current riparian ordinance as she's in the floodplain. She's concerned that there has been no discussion of flooding. Also is concerned that any changes in the area could cause water backing up which would increase the chances of flooding in her area.

Julie Mathews: the group needs to look at the difference between concepts and the actuality of the area. They need to determine better definitions of buffer zones. The whole area is on the down-slope, catching all the runoff from the upper areas of town. Trading densities does not effect what the land and water are going to do – floods happen. She would like the group to keep as much buffer/wildlife areas as possible. She would like the plan to work out 100% of what is going to go on with the wildlife areas as a whole, rather than have determinations made parcel by parcel, that way rights can be divided equally.

Gil Livney: also had the State do a delineation of the wetlands on his property and after closing a storm drain they determined there were none, which means the plan is incorrect. The character of the land doesn't change from year to year based on water. Wondered why the group was talking about taking land only from this area for wetland restoration, he believes we should be taking it from the whole of the city. Said there are not two creeks in the area and that creating this map without understanding the reality of the land is not okay.

Debbie Miller: every property in the area has been purchased with the knowledge of where the wetlands are, and it's disingenuous to say otherwise.

Sue DeMarinis: delineation of wetland areas during a drought is ridiculous. She showed an aerial photo from 2012 showing how green the area typically is. Stated density bonuses need to be reconsidered – higher densities should not be allowed near the conservation areas. Roads are necessary for connectivity but should be worked around what is going to be used and what natural resources we already have.

Nancy Boyer: thanked the group. She is invested in the area. A few years of wet weather, even though we're currently in a drought, will bring back many of the wetlands which should be protected.

4. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting will occur on August 21, at 4:30 in the Siskiyou Room.

Mayor asked if it was okay with the group for him to invite David Chapman to speak to how the transportation plan was created and how it affects this plan. Group agreed to the initiation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Secretary

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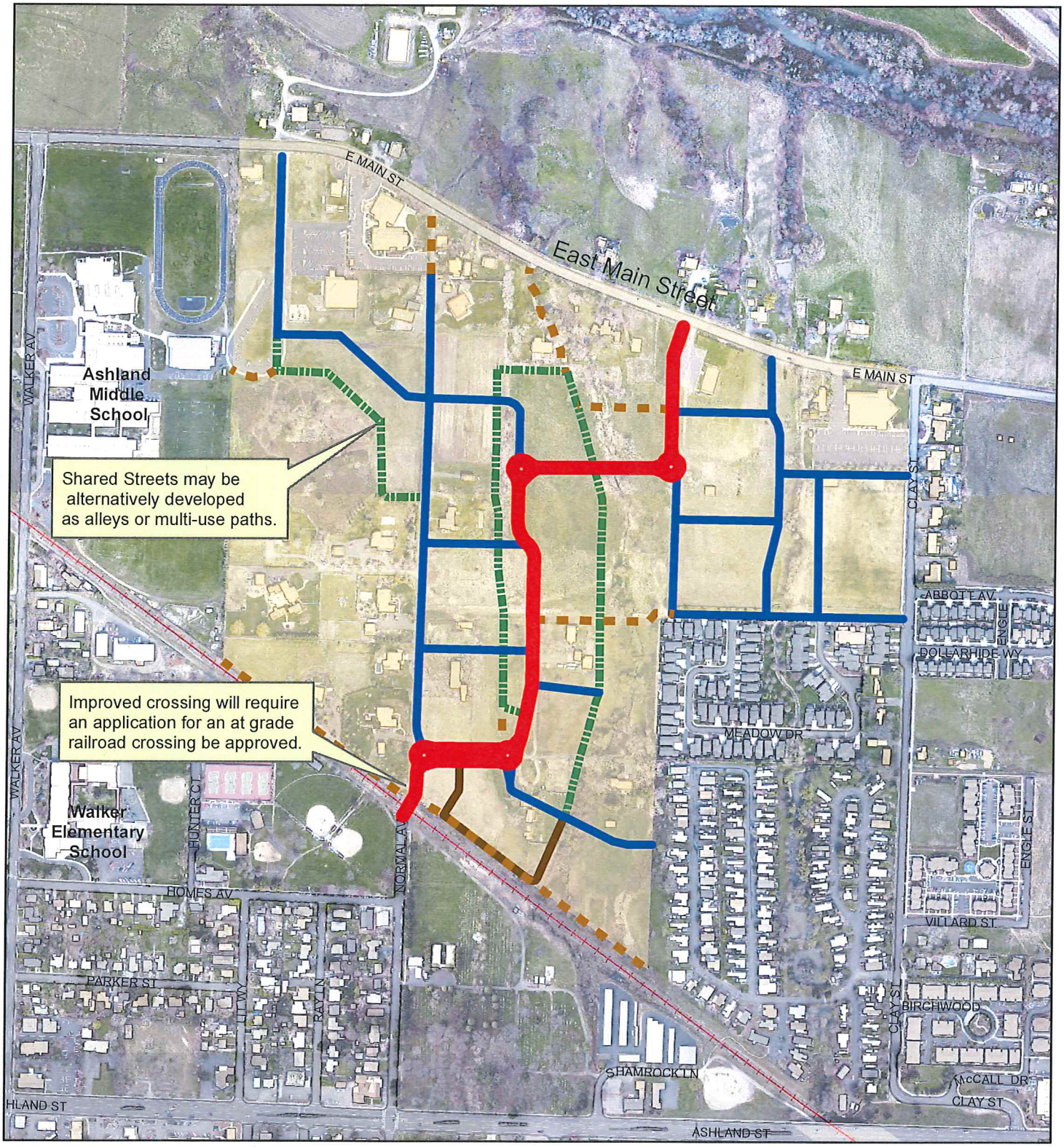


Normal Neighborhood Plan Street Network

0 200 400 800 1,200 Feet

Neighborhood Collector

Neighborhood Street

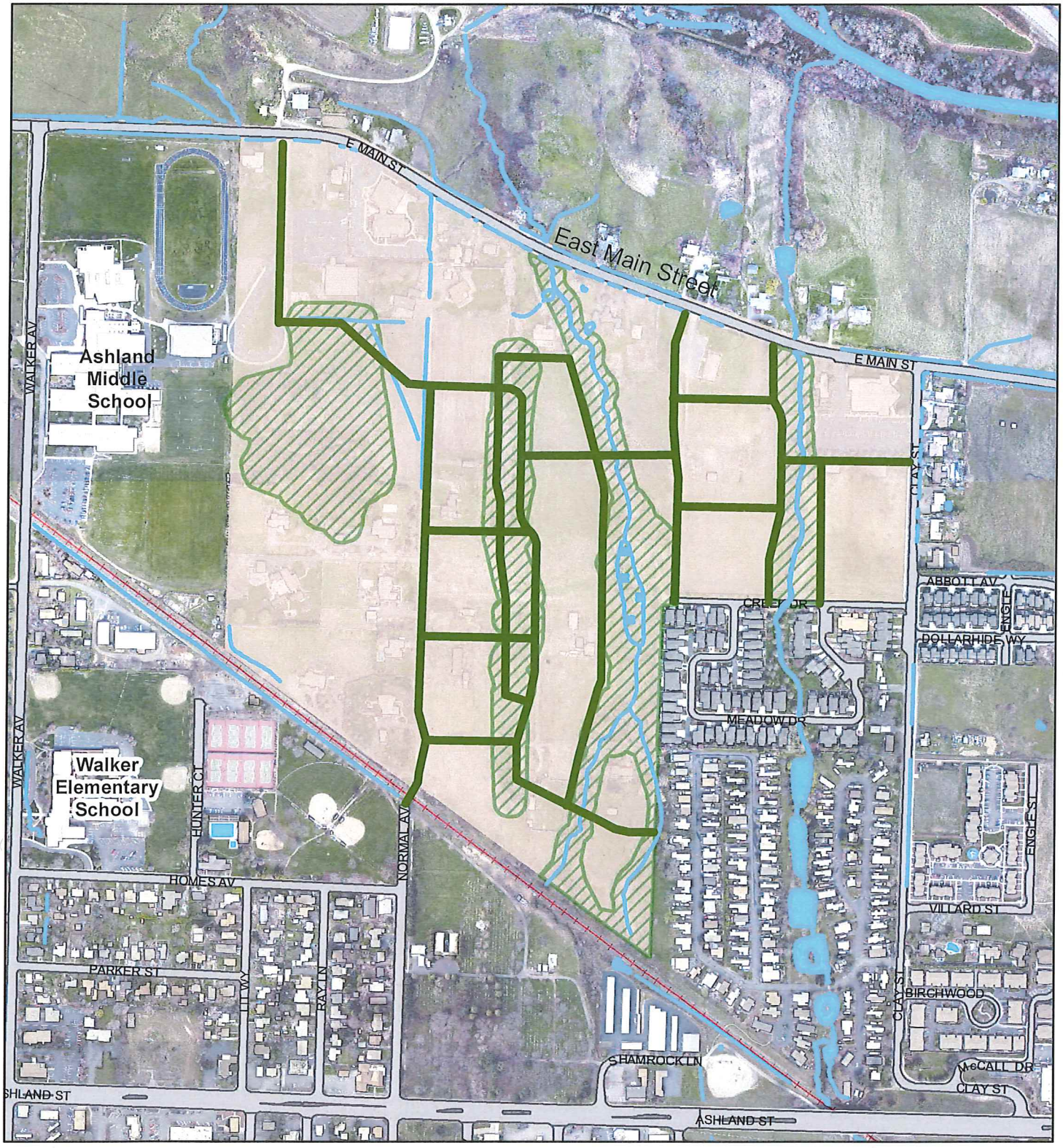
Shared Street

Alley

Multi-Use Path

3/11/2014

CITY OF ASHLAND



Normal Neighborhood Plan
Street Network - Green Streets

0 200 400 800 1,200 Feet

green streets

conservation areas

3/11/14

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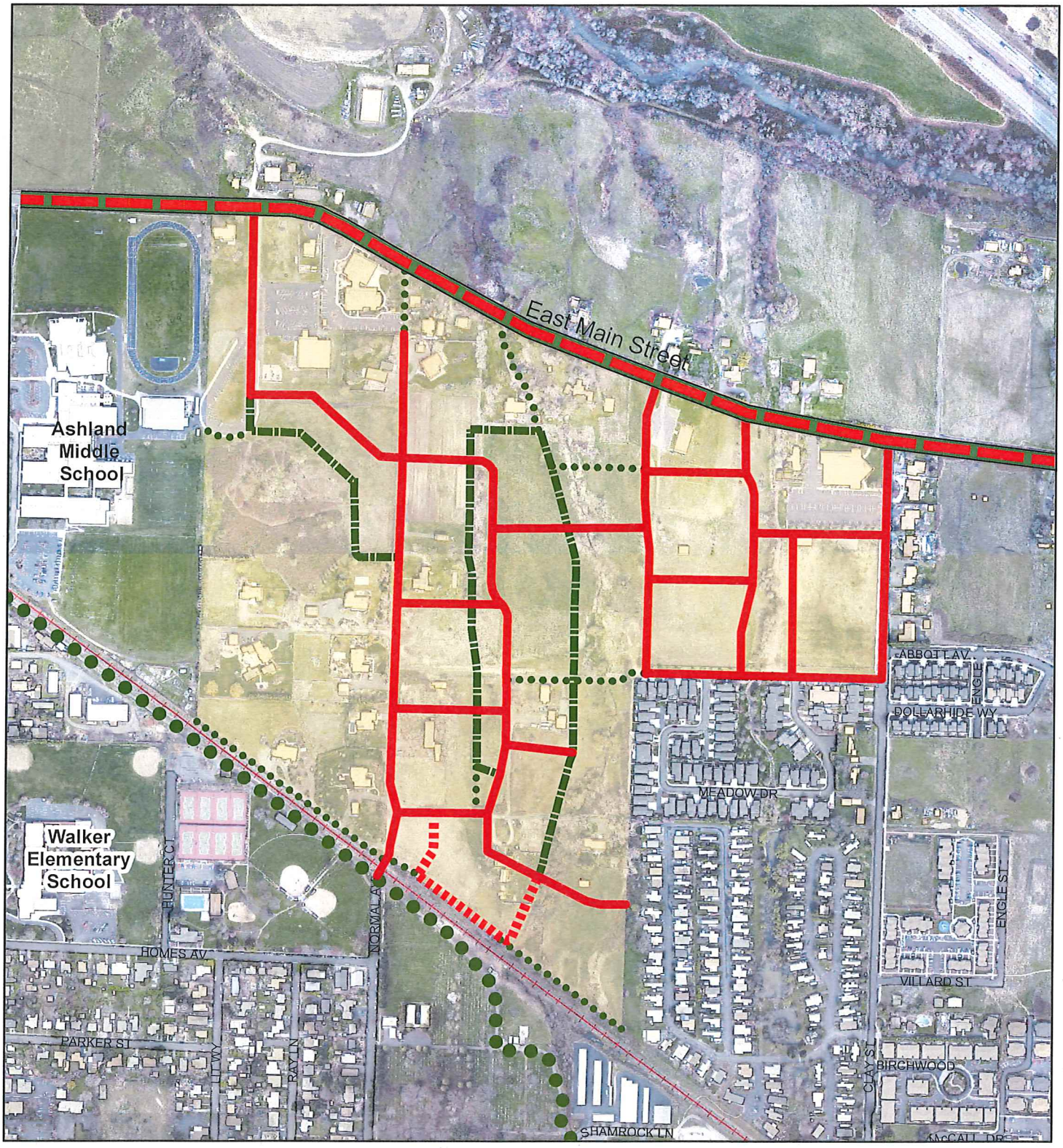

Normal Neighborhood Plan
Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

0 200 400 800 1,200 Feet

- alley
- streets with sidewalks
- avenue with sidewalks & bikelanes
- shared street
- multi-use path
- central bike path

3/11/2014

Discussion Concept

Discussion Questions

1. Extend Normal Ave to E. Main?
2. Shared St. @ wetland?
3. Boardwalk bike/ped path?
4. New East-west connection to school property?
5. Elimination of a shared St.?
6. New access shared st.?

8/6/2014

Normal Neighborhood Plan Working Group

Thank you for another great discussion. The wetlands/conservation/riparian/open spaces certainly generated a lively discussion. Land that is wet is important for so many reasons, and certainly needs to be treated with respect.

1) Wildlife corridor-Many creatures depend upon these narrow corridors. Grey fox, opossum, raccoon, skunk, deer, lizards, frogs, bears, coyotes and cougars regularly walk through the wet areas. A cougar was shot several years back in Wingspread, and probably others have visited since. A bear slept in the cottonwoods in Cemetery Creek this past spring, and a pack of coyotes often sings just below my house. These same corridors are very important migration routes for birds, and I'm amazed at the variety of species.
2) Floodplain-This hasn't been discussed much, but water must go somewhere. Some folks are saying that Cemetery Creek isn't that wet. I agree, except when a heavy rain comes, or a blockage releases upstream. The water really rushes by, and comes from somewhere and needs to go somewhere. The gentleman that said his land is dry must miss the wet times, as I do see cattails on his site. Cemetery Creek has native cottonwoods, willows and cattails.
3) I hope that the latest FEMA flood plan has been consulted. My house just misses Ashland's Modified Flood Zone by two houses. It would be so easy for Clay Creek or Cemetery Creek to cause problems in the future. The HOA for Meadowbrook Park Estates had to have many cottonwoods cut down that were threatening houses (built before the current setback rules). After the trees were cut, our HOA paid for removal of the boulders and grass, and a replanting of all native plants in accordance with Ashland's current riparian guidelines.
4) Visual appreciation and value-These green areas are sometimes spoken of as a problem or impediment to construction. How about the added property value? Why not embrace the greenbelts as special to the area? I actually bought my house after looking around Ashland and deciding that Cemetery Creek was special and would enhance the quality of my life. Is the Normal Plan being crafted for the neighborhoods or the builders?
5) Water issues-I lived in Chautauqua Trace before I purchased in MPE. The Trace homes were built on wet areas, and the wetlands were mitigated to a very small section. Well, many of the houses have water in the crawlspace, and the lawns are often saturated. One day our HOA gardener was mowing, when a large sinkhole opened under him. Fortunately he didn't fall in! The hole was deep and fairly large, but that can happen when wetlands and flow aren't respected.

Thank you for all you do.

Respectively,

Jan Vidmar
320 Meadow Dr.

Dear Normal Plan Subcommittee,

I represent 15 homeowners and approximately 23.62 acres of existing Normal neighborhood residents affected this project. The main point we all want to stress is density zoning should direct the placement of road connectivity. The transportation network should focus on moving the concentration of people from new neighborhoods/collectors onto city arterials. If there is a gradation of decreasing density from south to north, and from the center outward, the zoning density should direct the transportation plan.

A **North-South road**:

1) Best identified by Staff as New Normal Ave., would be the best connector between E. Main and Ashland St. Placement of this new neighborhood collector to the east of old Normal Ave., will most appropriately serve the traffic created by the new development, and preserve/respect the existing country lane that currently serves the residents on old Normal Ave.

2) Exiting onto E. Main would be safest to egress where there is a straight away and no blind curves blocking views of oncoming traffic. The two egresses slated around the Baptist Church property are well situated and all that are necessary to direct the central density of traffic onto a City Arterial like E. Main St.

3) Re-locate the upgraded public railroad crossing to meander eastward from old Normal Ave., and feed directly onto New Normal Ave., again respecting the existing neighborhood and not make its country lane wider and into a straight cut-through option.

4) MOST IMPORTANTLY - assure all residents, new and old, that there will be traffic calming measures in place on any new road. Staff has recommended and we concur with:

a) round-abouts

b) sinuous road patterns

c) stop signs at regular intervals

d) speed bumps/dips

e) planted central islands

As far as **East-West connectivity** goes, the transportation plan should alleviate traffic problems, not create them.

1) Guide development traffic onto new, more accommodating neighborhood collectors that will take the bulk of the housing traffic onto arterials like E. Main, rather than increasing congestion onto smaller, existing neighborhood roads like Creek Drive. This will also prevent further congestion & traffic hazards onto an already overloaded Clay St.

2) Minimize full size crossings over conservation areas and protect the wildlife corridors.

3) Avoid dumping traffic into a school zone by directing traffic from the New Normal Ave. onto E. Main where there is good visibility and no blind curves. With the development density centralized, there is no need to cross over a significant, state designated wetland (W-9), when the main access is needed for school children. A habitat-sensitive footpath, for bicycles, pedestrians, and hikers, would provide east-west connectivity for AMS access. 4) East-West alley connectors/woonerfs would be best for the development, and the conservation areas, rather than full sized connector roads.

Also, any development within the UGB is REQUIRED to have concomitant infrastructure development to and within it according to Urbanization Guidelines State Goal #14, & ORS 197.754 (1). That means, that City funding for Capital Improvements to E. Main St., as well as the necessary public upgrade to the private railroad crossing, must be in place along with any development plans. Please consider the effect this size of development will have on the full length of E. Main as it connects into downtown Ashland. Improvements should be slated for the entire road to handle the increased traffic flow – turning lanes, stop lights, more blinking crosswalks, etc.

A transportation plan should create a network of connectivity that considers all the above factors, while providing safe access to larger city arterial roads and public services/businesses. Transportation issues are directly interwoven with development and zoning density.

Thanks for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Sue DeMarinis

145 Normal Ave., Ashland, OR

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