

October 20, 2015

Mayor and City Councilors

City of Eugene
125 E. 8th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

My husband and I bought our house on Mill Street north of E. 29th Ave. in February of 2011. We'd been looking for a number of years; and it was the neighborhood, one of the few locations in south Eugene that offers affordable single-family housing, that enabled us to purchase our house. We chose our neighborhood because of its character, modest home size, the fact that it had a yard where we can grow food, and that it is a safe, quiet area for our family.

After we moved in, we were amazed by the sense of community we found in our new neighborhood. This is the first house I've lived in where I can tell you who my neighbors are. We host potlucks in our homes; we enjoy conversation as we sit in our front yards and visit and we look out for each other. It is truly a wonderful and vibrant place.

Within a few months of purchasing our house, my husband and I learned of the city's plan to change our neighborhood because of its location within an area that planning staff had identified for densification. I was saddened because of having finally found the perfect neighborhood for our family, and I was also alarmed because we had just invested a large amount of our savings into this purchase.

My neighbors were concerned as well. We contacted the Eugene Planning Division and asked to arrange a meeting. A small group of us met with Patricia Thomas who told us about the city's decision to densify our neighborhood, which she claimed was necessary to meet a state requirement to show how the city will provide housing for the projected population growth.

My husband and I, along with other neighbors within the proposed zone wanted to understand the impact this plan would have on our community and our investments in our homes, so we attended another larger neighborhood meeting.

Patricia Thomas also led this meeting. She explained how this plan would make our area more livable (even though we and other neighbors believe it is already *very* "livable"). As participants voiced concerns, Ms. Thomas frequently dismissed these concerns as unfounded fears, while she described all proposed changes as positive and exciting.

At one point, one of my neighbors at the meeting stated what seemed obvious to most of us: this meeting was not about addressing our concerns; the meeting's true purpose was to sell the Planning Division's own concept for the future of our neighborhood. It was at this meeting that I began to feel the Planning Division wasn't really interested in what community members living in the zone wanted. It seemed that the Planning Division staff had decided what they wanted to do and would move forward, regardless of neighbors' objections and concerns.

During this time, my husband decided to write a letter to our neighborhood association, the Friendly Area Neighbors. I attended the FAN board meeting where his letter was read. Their

reaction was surprising and upsetting: Board members dismissed the concerns raised in the letter, saying they had already discussed this issue and didn't need to delve back into it. It appeared the FAN board cared very little about the neighborhood east of Willamette Street, despite this being the area of the FAN that would be most impacted by the proposed rezoning.

Since neither the Planning Department staff nor FAN leaders seemed to care about our concerns, I had little hope that my participation in the workshops led by planning staff would make a difference. Nevertheless, I attended two of the workshops. I, along with other neighbors who attended, voiced our concerns about the additional people, cars, congestion, and the ability of the current area to handle this densification. Again, our comments didn't seem to make an impact. For example, to this day neighbors are still asking for traffic studies to be conducted.

In contrast, I couldn't help but notice at the round table discussion in which I participated that business owners (who actually lived outside of the zone) were very excited about the opportunity to move more people into the neighborhoods in order for them to expand their businesses and increase their revenue.

One issue that I still find confusing and disconcerting is that Patricia Thomas was adamant in those first meetings that this plan was a *requirement* because of a state mandate to show Eugene's ability to house a certain number of people as the population grows. Recently, however, city planners are telling us that no, the densification planned for the south Eugene area is *not* required to meet state mandates. If the radical rezoning of our neighborhood *isn't* required, then why are the planners trying so hard to *force* this densification on us?

My husband and I are faced with an awful decision of what to do. Do we leave a neighborhood we love with a wonderful group of people unique to this area because of what could become of it if the City Council were to adopt the proposed SW-SAZ zone? It saddens me that we bought our home with certain expectations due to current character and zoning; and now, the city could choose to change this. It seems very unjust.

The financial risk is a serious threat as well. Neighbors have asked at multiple meetings about the potential drop in the value of our homes. The planning staff's answer was always the same: We don't really know. While this uncertainty may not seem to be a big gamble for the planners, it poses a huge financial risk for my family, as our home is our major investment.

I would like to request that the City Council not take any action on the proposed zoning change and instead offer more genuine opportunities for the neighbors to shape the future of the already existing, healthy neighborhood we love.

Respectfully,

[A Mill Street Resident]