

Fairmount group wants controls on Chevy dealer

By David Brown
Of the Emerald

Part of a recommendation to improve the neighborhood south of Franklin Boulevard is "inappropriate" says Steve Romania, general manager of Joe Romania Chevrolet.

Among the improvements proposed by the Fairmount Neighborhood Association is a stipulation that the Eugene Planning Commission review the car dealership's property any time it applies for a permit for new construction.

A Fairmount planning committee put the site review provision into the Fairmount Special Area Study to head off possible adverse effects on the neighborhood from development on Romania's property, says Chuck Sowards, president of the Fairmount Neighborhood Association.

The site review provision, which applies to all commercial property, is there to protect the neighborhood from unsightliness, noise, excessive lighting and traffic problems, Sowards says.

But Romania says the plan may be overprotective.

"If we wish to erect a partition in our showroom which was over five feet in height... we could potentially be required to install landscaping along an entire block face, modify lighting systems, or take any number of other actions which theoretically could be required as part of the site review process."

The cost of an initial site review — the planning commission charges \$375 — and subsequent costs of adherence to site review requirements could be disproportionate to the cost of development, Romania says.

The "provisions do require that he jumps through some extra hoops... beyond just getting a building permit," Sowards says. But the car lot may be "the most prominent problem we've had in the neighborhood."

In 1976, the Fairmount Neighborhood Association unanimously endorsed a statement signed by over 375 area residents who opposed the zone change of an adjoining lot that Romania wanted to expand into.

The city rejected the zone change. Therefore, the dealership operates on a space restrictive basis, says Jim Saul, planning consultant for Joe Romania.

The 1976 statement cited excessive lighting, noise pollution, unsightliness and parking as major problems associated with the dealership. Those problems still draw complaints, Sowards says.

Romania says he has received only one complaint from area residents over the past four years. He points out that the lighting on one of three lots was modified to comply with problems mentioned during his participation with the neighborhood committee. Before the study began, an area resident landscaped the face of Romania's lots abutting the neighborhood, he says.

Sowards calls the landscaping "minimal" and says traffic problems caused by trucks unloading in the street and employees parking in the neighborhood are main concerns of his.

During a public hearing for the area study recommendations, Sowards testified that he almost had a car accident as a direct result of a truck unloading cars into the Romania lot

from the street.

Trucks unload on the car lots whenever there is room, and restricted space makes employee parking on dealership property impossible, Romania says.

In his statement to the Eugene Planning Commission, Romania proposed restricting site review to a strip of land, 67 feet long, facing the neighborhood.

The Fairmount plan, which is being reviewed by the planning commission, also sets policies to guide future government, institutional and business development in the neighborhood.



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