

'Middle housing' amendment would make new zoning code meaningless

OPEN FORUM

By Martie Sucec

"The City that works" is Portland's motto, but it doesn't seem to be working for everyone.

There's a lot of work, certainly, in reshaping the city from its comfortable middle-class neighborhoods into more and more multi-story apartments and condos, with little or no parking.

Modest, affordable houses are being plowed under. Renters and homeowners are being displaced and increasing homelessness continues to pose challenges the city can't handle.

To allegedly deal with some of these problems, Commissioner Steve Novick, with support from Mayor Charlie Hales, introduced an eleventh-hour amendment called "Middle Housing" into the new Comprehensive Plan recently adopted.

This policy would allow multiple units on any lot within a quarter-mile of "centers" and "corridors." Multnomah is a center, so all of the

neighborhood would be subject to this policy.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has come up with a set of rules to implement this policy, but these rules would leave the determination up to the Bureau of Development Services to determine on what lots are appropriate.

So, in other words, the zone that's on the zoning map for your property will no longer mean anything. You won't be able to do anything about several units going up on any lot on your street, even in the middle of single-family houses.

The rules say nothing about the environment or stormwater management. Also, the new tree code allows demolishing trees on any lot zoned R5—now meaning a house on a 5000 square-foot lot.

We have seen what city policies and support of rampaging mega-developers have already done to the character of many neighborhoods across the city. Good housing stock has been destroyed and hundreds of trees plowed down that are vital to shade, habitat, soil stability, and storm water management.

What's worse is that an organization called "Portland for Everyone" is pushing a new rule that would allow this policy to apply to any residential lot anywhere in the city. This group is made up of 1000 Friends of Oregon, developers, and some community organizations.

They say this kind of wholesale density is needed to preserve farm and forest land (urban growth boundary) and provide "affordable housing."

But the new plan itself says that Portland already has the capacity for new growth and the UGB is just fine. And the kind of wholesale clearance and redevelopment of still-expensive housing units will eventually come to threaten the UGB, not protect it.

If you don't like what you see happening to Portland's neighborhoods, you can help in the campaign the Multnomah Neighborhood Association has mounted to stop the out-of-control development.

Get more information—go to DontRezoneUs.org. Give testimony at the City Council on the middle housing rule on Nov. 9 or write a letter to City Council (cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov) telling them you want the zoning map to determine what goes on a lot, not a city bureau whose salaries are largely paid by developers' fees.

Donate your time and money to mount an effective campaign that will preserve single-family neighborhoods, trees, and the environment. Elect city officials that support healthy policies that will protect its neighborhood character, its tree canopy and habitat, and historical resources.

The Post welcomes reader response. Please stick to one subject and limit letters to 300 words and guest columns to 500 words. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity, clarity, punctuation, spelling and libel concerns. Email editor@multnomahpost.com for more information.

South Burlingame Crimes

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detail to clean out the camps of the garbage and stolen items.

Neighbors also spent two days removing underbrush along the fences and around the camp sites making them visible from the streets with hopes of making it less appealing for the drug users and criminals.

Since the abandonment of the camps in the South Burlingame neighborhood, there has not been a report of any petty crimes on Nextdoor.

Portland Police Officer Andrew Caspar attended the South Burlingame meeting and gave praise to the quick action taken, but warned that this will likely happen again.

Caspar shared various Portland resources. He expressed the importance of reporting crimes. These reports are used to delegate resources citywide.

Caspar briefly discussed the broken window theory. The theory is that maintaining and monitoring urban environments to prevent small crimes (such as vandalism) helps to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes from happening.

The broken window theory is not without critics, but during the last year the neighborhood has had an increase of burglaries from cars, garages, delivered package thefts, and break-ins. The frequency and aggressiveness of these crimes has also escalated.

It is understood that neither this response, nor the broken window theory addresses the underlying drug epidemic and homelessness. The individuals inhabiting the camps appear to be addicts and are still in the city, somewhere.

South Burlingame neighbors are currently spending more time on the trails monitoring the camps. There is also a renewed interest in the Neighborhood Watch program, but neighbors understand most of these crimes happened during the late night and early morning hours.

Neighbors said they are frustrated by the uptick of burglaries and forced entries. And while they appreciate police efforts, neighbors also realize that they are the eyes and ears of their own communities.

No one wants to enable a drug abuser, nor do they wish to see neighbors held up at gunpoint. Stories about crime in South Burlingame have been broadcast recently on Fox 12 and KGW television news programs.

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