

Hello Greenway! We love you

WHAT SMART GROWTH LOOKS LIKE IN EUGENE

I'm deeply involved in the Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing (OMC) project situated in the River Road area along the Willamette River and bike path. Planning is under way with the city of Eugene and we're aiming to break ground June 2014. I'm also a River Road resident and OMC household member along with my wife and two boys — we currently live just a block away from the beautiful cohousing site where we've gathered many times with friends and family. We welcome cohousing into our neighborhood and plan on living at OMC as soon as it's built. We also look forward to living closer to some of our very good friends on Oakleigh Lane.

There's no big, bad developer from out of state trying to make a profit here. OMC members are the developers. The budget is tight to make it viable. We care very much for the River Road area and want to strengthen and contribute to our neighborhood and its ties to the larger community. We are teachers, musicians, landscapers, nurses, artists, retirees, builders, consultants and more who support local merchants, schools and organizations. We believe that the urban growth boundary is a good thing, promoting infill, curtailing sprawl and preserving open land for farm use. We believe OMC is what smart growth looks like. It is our goal to build a housing development with a positive social environment. Our larger vision involves returning to a sustainable, ecological village lifestyle where we can raise families within a community that provides support, security and aging in place.

Emerging demographic changes are all around us — moms working outside the home; fewer children per household; more single-individual households; the increasing desire for a convenient, practical, responsible, economical, interesting and fun lifestyle; and an easier way to live a little lighter on the planet.

We're not asking for a zoning change or special exceptions. We're proposing 28 units (homes) on 2.3 acres, less density and less square footage than is allowed by code. It's fair to say that if an outside developer were to get this property, they would max it out by building a spaghetti system of streets lined with 32 of the same houses dropped into place. Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing is also proposing more on-site parking than is required in order to keep cars off the road and to help maintain the "country lane" feel of the neighborhood. We are also not going to create any shade on our neighbors or build on the parkway.

Cohousers care about their neighbors and the environment. Our sensitive design was forged in a process that has required us to seek consensus, explore and understand a slightly different lifestyle. Our design allows for a great diversity of ages and family types. We celebrate that diversity! By pooling resources, we can build common facilities to be shared with our neighbors, including a large kitchen and banquet space. There is a "sweet spot" when it



comes to right-sizing cohousing developments — if the group is too small, it'll tend to function similarly to households in which a number of unrelated people share a house or an apartment. If too big, it'll have an institutional feel and will lack the intimacy required to make its residents feel as if they have a stake in its success. OMC members now have a deeper understanding of how cohousing works, and how it addresses our needs both for community and private life while offering a feeling of belonging. Cohousing is not intentional communities or communes organized around

ideological beliefs or a charismatic leader, but it instead offers a "new" approach to housing that speaks directly to the desire for a more practical and social home environment. They are organized, planned and managed by the residents themselves.

OMC has always been very open and forthcoming with information about its development, and we have a strong two-year history of neighborhood outreach, including monthly third Sunday site visits and a website that's regularly updated. We are actively seeking more members so, if OMC interests you, please call about our next meeting (357-8303). I also strongly encourage anyone interested in cohousing to read *Creating Cohousing/Building Sustainable Communities* by Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett. OMC has donated a few copies of the book to the Eugene Public Library and I have a copy to share — if you'd like to borrow it or meet over coffee, just let me know.

Will Dixon is a local architect with a small practice in the Whiteaker neighborhood. He is also current president of the Southwestern Oregon Chapter of the AIA, the American Institute of Architects, and an immediate past board member of RRCO, the River Road Community Organization.

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