

April 27, 2015

To: Lake Oswego Planning Commission

From: Mary Bresnahan, Lake Oswego resident at 1091 Bickner Street.

Dear Planning Commission,

I write to oppose any changes to substandard lots in Lake Oswego. The reasons that I oppose the changes are the following:

- A. The problem concerning the substandard lots is overstated. Here's why:
 1. Properties that are well maintained are worth more sold to new buyers in their current conditions compared to selling to a developer who would then tear down the structures and subdivide the land. As an example, I spoke to a realtor about my home – it is in good condition and worth roughly \$175,000 more as-is, than if I decided to sell to a developer for the land.
 2. Many of the homes that are subject to historic boundaries are in fact historic. They are subject to historic registry rules and attract a wide portion of the population that enjoys historic homes. There is no incentive to subdivide in these cases as their properties are sought after and their values are strong.
 3. When looking at the "Historic Tax Lot Boundaries" map for Hallinan Heights, you can see that roughly 1/3 of the neighborhood has substandard lots pertaining to the properties. Of this share, only a small number of owners will revert to historic boundaries and subdivide – it's only the cases where there's a clear financial benefit. It is my belief that this share will not be large enough to create undue stress on existing neighborhood amenities such as roads and schools.

- B. For those who chose to subdivide and replace one structure with two, it's a good thing:
 1. Hallinan Heights has many older homes that are run down. Structures are outdated and need replacing. Keeping the historic boundaries in place allows the owner to sell his property without having to do extensive work on the site; the neighborhood gets much needed new housing stock.
 2. The historic boundaries allow for a much greater diversity in housing stock. A vibrant community offers many different types of housing for its residents – single family units both large and small, different lot sizes, different structures such as condos and townhomes, rental units both large and small. Everyone has different tastes at different stages in life – let's offer many different types of housing in Lake Oswego.

3. For example, if an owner of an older home on a 10,000 SF lot decided to sell to a developer who would then tear down the structure and build two new 2,000 SF homes on smaller lots – the community benefits from this because it offers many more options to buyers who want smaller homes, smaller properties. Without the historic boundary, the owner may still sell to a developer because it's less effort, or perhaps the value of the home lies in the land. The developer would then put up one expensive larger structure forcing younger families to look elsewhere, or prohibiting older LO residents to downsize. This would be an unintended negative consequence of taking away the historic boundaries. Let's use the historic boundaries for creative replacement of housing stock.

C. Maintaining each person's property rights in Lake Oswego is the right thing.

1. Taking away the historic boundaries will hurt the owners who need it most. The owners who would use the historic boundary to sell to a developer are those whose structures have no real value often due to lack of maintenance. The value's in the land. Without the ability to subdivide the land, the owner must sell for a lower price.
2. Keeping the historic boundaries in place offers a chance for owners and developers to put a plan together to refresh housing stock, an important community amenity. An example of this is the Cedar Street development where the Craigs and Silver Oak built beautiful homes. I walk my daughter through the site every day on the way up to Hallinan Elementary and the new houses are terrific, a real benefit to our neighborhood.
3. Property rights are the foundation of our country akin to freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Let homeowners decide what is best for them.

Thanks very much for allowing me to express my opinion about this matter. It means a great deal.

Warm regards,

Mary Bresnahan