

**LU15-0017**

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What is the goal for the continued development of Lake Oswego? We have looked to the Comprehensive Plan and the Plan speaks loudly to the preservation of neighborhood character. The Plan does not contemplate crowding houses into our neighborhoods via lot line adjustments and the development of substandard lots. Many residents as well as our organization, the Lake Oswego Preservation Society, share the Plan's vision: the retention of neighborhood character as our community grows.

Lot line adjustments are ministerial decisions that have long-term impacts on neighborhood character and community livability. Because of these ramifications, these decisions should not be ministerial. The decision to build one or multiple houses on a substandard lot, along with lot line adjustments, alters our neighborhoods dramatically. The City Code doesn't allow for public input or an appeals process, which renders the most impacted residents voiceless. Shouldn't Lake Oswegans have the right of citizen involvement in these defining land use decisions?

One case in point involves our third oldest neighborhood, First Addition, which was platted in 1888 for ironworkers employed by Oswego's second furnace. Albeit for different underlying reasons, similar issues and outcomes are involved in other parts of the City.

First Addition homes sitting on double lots or a lot and a half have become prime targets for redevelopment. Developers have left unsolicited offers of three quarters of a million dollars and more on porches for the purchase of homes – sight unseen. It just takes a signature to put the machinery of redevelopment in place. There are consequences for the community and the neighborhood such as:

- Undesignated historic homes and our diverse housing stock are lost, often without even a photograph to remind us of what was once a part of our streetscape. These are the very structures that contribute to, or may even constitute, the “charm” of our neighborhoods;
- More affordable housing is demolished making our community demographics less diverse and reducing the opportunity for families to move into the community which is a stated goal of our Comprehensive Plan;
- Daylight and views disappear as much more massive and taller structures replace cottage-sized homes which makes one question whether this new housing is consistent with neighborhood character;
- Unregulated demolitions send clouds of lead paint particulates into the air to settle permanently on surrounding properties, creating long-term public health hazards;

- Backhoes create rubble to be trucked to landfills without any focus on sustainable reuse of existing building materials;
- Chain saws bring down trees, often older than the houses, even trees which aren't in the building footprint;
- Neighbors are subjected to weeks, and sometimes months, of construction noise and heavy equipment traffic impacting our community livability as well as our infrastructure.

What's happening in First Addition is another instance in which residents, often long-term, have no input, no recourse, and no voice. They can only watch as their neighborhood character is diminished and community livability is eroded.

There are some who often argue that private property owners have a right to do what they choose with their land; however, those choices have consequences which can negatively impact their neighbors, neighborhoods, and thereby, our community. Those impacted by those choices should have the right to participate in the related land use process and decision; and, not be excluded by ever increasing ministerial decisions which regularly deny the opportunity for a public hearing or appeal, or even notification of pending action.

The City of Lake Oswego, through its land use regulations, actions, processes and procedures must be compelled to uphold the vision and objectives found in our adopted Comprehensive Plan. As an example, the Recommended Action Measure: "Encourage the remodeling, restoration, and reuse of existing housing as an alternative to tearing down functional buildings." How is this recommendation supporting community sustainability, neighborhood compatibility, and historic preservation being implemented by our Development Code, processes and procedures?

The "First Addition Scenario" may be unleashed on other neighborhoods across our City, depending on this Planning Commission's recommendation, although this time around it would target single homes that sit on multiple, small lots such as those concentrated in our second oldest neighborhood first platted in 1883, which is now called Hallinan.

Hallinan currently has the greatest number of extant iron industry era homes so it's critical to also keep in mind the Comprehensive Plan's historic preservation goal: Preserve, promote, and maintain the historical, archaeological and cultural resources of the community. Far too often we've seen landmark properties, which should be protected by our City code, threatened by the potential for economic gain afforded by redevelopment. In fact, only 43 homes remain on the City's Landmark Designation List.

We encourage you to define legally created lots and amend the code so lots platted in the nineteenth century – well before Oswego's incorporation as a City, before the adoption of zoning standards, and before a development code was adopted – don't supersede our contemporary zoning standards.

You, as our City's Planning Commission, have the ability to recommend a solution, which will not allow underlying substandard lots and ministerial lot line adjustments to

be used to build multiple houses where there was only one. How can replacing a single house on a large lot, or one house straddling several small lots, with multiple homes maintain neighborhood character? And how could this even be an option if we abide by our own Comprehensive Plan?

Let's develop and implement policies and actions that encourage retention of our existing, functional housing stock and our landmarks, which, in turn, preserves neighborhood character, community livability, and contributes to our historic preservation goal -- all of which are part of our own governing document, the Comprehensive Plan.

Let's also find a solution that gives residents a voice. Decisions that permanently and dramatically alter the fabric of the neighborhoods should not be exempted from a public land use process. Let's not have a one-sided solution that favors those who may have little long-term commitment to or interest in our neighborhoods and community.