



TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Debra Andreades, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Street Connectivity – Work Session #2 (PP 16-0004)

DATE: April 13, 2017 **MEETING DATE:** April 24, 2017

ACTION

Conduct a second work session on issues related to street connectivity and review the Street Connectivity standard, LOC 50.06.003.4, to determine if there are potential code amendments that would allow some flexibility in applying the standard.

BACKGROUND

In a joint Planning Commission-City Council meeting on July 19, 2016, the City Council instructed staff and the Commission to evaluate the Local Street Connectivity standard in LOC 50.06.003.4, after the public benefit of requiring a street connection was raised to the City Council during an appeal hearing for a Minor Partition (LU 15-0040; AP 16-02) on a large undeveloped parcel. Although both the Development Review Commission and City Council found that the code required the connection, the Council expressed interest in having more flexibility in applying the standard.

At the first work session on January 23, 2017, staff provided examples of past cases where the Street Connectivity standard required connection, and other cases where an exception was approved as allowed by the standard.

DISCUSSION

As discussed in the first work session, the purpose of the connectivity standard is to support the orderly provision of infrastructure, including transportation and utilities, in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation System Plan. Planning for an interconnected transportation system is in the public interest because it facilitates even dispersal of traffic, including neighborhood circulation for vehicles, emergency responders, pedestrians, and bicycles. Another purpose is to avoid creating situations where properties in the vicinity of a development are precluded access. The standard is applicable where:

- development results in the construction of a street,
- development is adjacent to another development that has already provided a street 'stub' for future extension, or

- where the development site is at least 1.75 acres and the distance between local street intersections after development would otherwise be more than 530 feet.

A street stub is a **street** segment, usually relatively short in length, which terminates at the boundary of a development, as indicated in the map to the right which illustrates the case that was appealed to the City Council last year (LU 15-0040) in the Palisades neighborhood where Sienna Drive had been stubbed to the site boundary in a prior subdivision approval. The purpose of **stub streets** is to ultimately connect to abutting property when it is developed. No turn around or cul-de-sac is provided, as it would consume more right-of-way than is needed for future use.

The street was required to be dedicated but because only one new lot was created the developer was not required to construct the street.

As a reminder, the conditioning authority to construct a full street connection is determined to be mitigation, based on rough proportionality, of the impacts of development. The result is that a street may be dedicated, but the actual construction of the connection may not occur until there is sufficient development that creates enough impacts to warrant it, or until such time as the City Council constructs it. This is how the City plans for future needs.



LOC 50.06.003.4.c.vi allows exceptions to providing the street connection in the following situations:

- where topography, sensitive lands, or other specified obstacles make a connection impracticable; for example, where existing development prevents a street extension from being made or the cost of extending a street through sensitive lands (e.g., by requiring a bridge or special construction techniques) outweighs the public benefit (e.g., direct and convenient access for residents and emergency responders);
- the connection would violate other City/County/State standards or result in a traffic safety issue; or
- the connection would violate provisions of recorded documents or agreements existing as of May 1, 1995 which preclude the connection.

Where the criteria for an exception are met, a pedestrian-bicycle access way is required in lieu of a street. That access way must comply with the requirement that spacing between bicycle and pedestrian connections is no more than 330 feet measured from the nearest bike/pedestrian connection intersection, with the cross street.

A reduction in the number of pedestrian/bike connections is allowed if:

- reducing the number or location of pedestrian connections would not significantly add to travel time/distance to activity centers;
- the development pattern on abutting properties precludes logical connection; or

- the traffic impacts from development/redevelopment are low and do not provide reasonable justification for the estimated costs of a pedestrian access way.

At the January work session, staff presented an example of where an exception to the connectivity standard was approved, for The Reserve at Westlake Planned Development (LU 13-0064), located between Westlake Drive (formerly Fosberg Road) and Rogers Road. The alternative, a pedestrian/bike connection through the sensitive lands district, was also found to be significantly costly relative to the public benefit. In this case, although the proposal would add approximately 180 trips to the existing street system (10 trips per day per dwelling unit), a residential access way through the site would have had to cross the steeply sloping stream corridor that bisects the site, and the exemption did not result in significant out-of-direction travel for drivers or pedestrians, nor greater pedestrian safety.

A very recent example of where an exception to the connectivity standard was approved is for a Minor Partition at 13590 Goodall Road (LU 16-0047). The three-parcel partition did not require construction of a street; access is taken from a private access lane. In addition, the existing patterns of development preclude a future public street from east to west through the site because the Belcourt Subdivision to the east has a conservation easement in the rear (west) portion of four of the lots, one of which abuts the partition site. These lots are developed which precludes extension of a public road through the partition site to Leslie Lane. Per the Street Connectivity standard, pedestrian connections on public easements are required if an exception to a street connection is allowed. This site did not meet the criteria for an exception to the *pedestrian* connection because a pedestrian connection from the east to the subject site had been planned, as indicated on the plat for the Belcourt Subdivision, above, and there are no



topographic or development constraints to providing the connection.

The above plat includes a public pedestrian easement located between Lots 4 and 5 from Leslie Lane and a pedestrian easement within the conservation easement in the rear of Lots 3 through 6 that could connect to the partition site. These easements were established as a condition of approval of the Belcourt Subdivision development in 2001 (LU 01-0038). (The conservation easement was to meet the open space requirement for the development and per a note on the plat, must remain in its natural state; a pedestrian pathway is allowed.)

At the time the Belcourt Subdivision was approved, in lieu of a full street connection, the pedestrian easement was provided so that Lake Oswego High School could be accessed via Hazel Road which intersects with Goodall Road west of the partition site. The construction of this pedestrian connection was deferred until the future development of the property to the west of Belcourt Subdivision, which is the above partition site. The result was that the public pedestrian access in the Belcourt subdivision was dedicated, but *construction* of the connection was deferred. At the time, the DRC made a finding that “when the accessway connection is completed there will be a significant reduction in ‘out of direction’ travel between the residents of the neighborhood and the school grounds”. Sixteen years later, the abutting property is being developed and the connection is required to be made. The connection is to be constructed within the public pedestrian easement, which will extend over the private access lane serving the partition and connecting to Goodall Road.

Planning Commission Comments

At the January 23, 2017 work session, the Commission discussed redistribution of traffic. The City Engineer, who was in attendance, stated that the connections required by the Street Connectivity standard help to avoid out-of-direction travel and create more options for vehicular travel as well as pedestrian travel. Trip distribution studies could show how the impacts are shared on the street system. However, on the question of livability, it is difficult to quantify because livability is affected when there is no place to safely walk due to the lack of sidewalks, resulting in more vehicular traffic.

Metro Requirements

As discussed at the January 23rd work session, the street connectivity standard in LOC 50.06.003.4 implements the City’s Transportation System Plan. The standard also complies with the Metro Urban Growth Management Functional Plan, which requires local governments to maintain street connectivity standards. Metro’s code standard for Connectivity [Metro Code 3.08.110] was provided to the Commission at the January work session.

The language of the Metro code appears to only prescribe local connectivity standards for developments of five acres and larger. Subsection E contains a spacing standard for new streets for sites that are more than 5 acres in size. Subsection F governs sites that are smaller than 5 acres, however, the standards in Subsection F state that they must be consistent with Subsection E. It appears then that there is no difference in the applicability of the standard based on lot size. Staff contacted Metro to inquire how this standard should be interpreted. Metro responded that the intent is for the connectivity spacing standards to apply in such a way that small parcel developments do not preclude street connectivity. They acknowledged

that Metro Code is not clear and that they would work on clarifying it during the 2018 update of the Regional Transportation Plan.

Areas for Additional Flexibility

The existing code already allows an exception when development patterns on abutting property precludes the connection. The following approach may provide additional flexibility in applying the code:

Where the public benefit from a prospective street connection is minimal (or de minimis), allow an exception.

What is the public benefit that would be minimal? How is it evaluated?

Based on the purpose of the standard (“the layout of the street system does not create excessive travel lengths or limit route choices”), and consistent with the code exception for number of pedestrian connections, in Subsection c.viii(1), an exception to street connectivity might be warranted if it would not significantly add to travel time/distance to activity centers; that is, it has no effect on the dispersal of traffic. The code language for the exception to number of pedestrian connections follows:

viii. The reviewing authority may allow a reduction in the number of residential accessway connections required by subsection 4.c.vii of this section based on findings that demonstrate:

(1) That reducing the number or location of connections would not significantly add to travel time or distance from the proposed development to bus lines or activity centers in the area, such as schools, shopping, or parks; or

Using the above provision as a starting point, a provision could be added to Section vi that allows an exception for *street* connections where neither a street nor pedestrian connection would reduce out of direction travel or relieve traffic on existing streets. However, objective criteria would need to be developed and, as discussed above, there may be situations where an exception for either a street or pedestrian connection, or both, cannot be approved due to an existing planned connection located off-site.

CONCLUSION

Staff requests input from the Commission on the pros and cons of the concepts discussed above prior to drafting a code amendment for public review and further Planning Commission work sessions and a public hearing.