

To: Planning Commission
From: Cindy Walbridge, Planning Director
Subject: Addendum Report on Rezone application 16-37 Morrison Park – Tax Lot 700
Date: February 13, 2017

Context for Zone Change Request: The City has received testimony in opposition to this zone change request with much of the opposition citing to the need for park lands, the preservation of open space, and the promotion of civic values. For the City Council, this opposition testimony reflects a narrow segment of the values of our citizens, and is only part of the city's needs. On the other hand, there are the Council's clearly stated policy to increase the amount and availability of affordable housing (Council Goals 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017). This Council policy embraces the concept that "if you work here you should be able to live here" and a revised Goal 10 (Housing) that references the Buildable Lands and Housing Needs Analysis completed in 2015 (Strategy #3- Housing Needs Analysis). A technical question raised by the opposition testimony is why does the City have to rezone public land to meet this affordable housing need? The response is that the private sector housing market cannot and has not met the public need for affordable housing. The City has also received testimony in support of the zone change.

We have the unusual circumstance of being a small town in the center of a federally designated National Scenic Area (NSA). Thousands of acres of private and public land designated for protection surround the City. We have designated Scenic Area lands on 3 boundaries of the City (called Urban Area by the NSA). This designation has brought a dramatic increase in tourism, and the Urban Areas are expected to accommodate these burgeoning tourism needs. Those needs include lodging, eating, recreation, maintenance, retail - the whole gamut of the tourist economy and local residents need to keep their "playground" available. The typical worker in these tourist businesses, however, earns minimum wage, or just above. The typical worker in these tourist businesses cannot afford any type of housing in Hood River. Does the typical worker, then, have to live elsewhere in order to work here? The Council has adopted policies that suggest that people who work in the Hood River community should have decent affordable housing options within this community.

The private housing industry has said it cannot build multi-family in Hood River (see letter from David Simon 2/10/17 Attachment "B") because of land cost and availability and financing. The available housing and home sale prices bear that out. Joel Madsen, Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will provide supporting testimony that subsidized housing is critical in supporting the workers and our community's infrastructure. The Housing Needs Analysis concluded there are just enough residential lands for the next 20 years. However, there currently are no lands available for subsidized attached housing within the City. Some argue this is the greatest need in Hood River. Since the private sector cannot provide low cost land or developments, public sector investment is required to provide housing for people who work here and cannot afford market housing prices, or we will be forced to accept that we cannot accommodate all the City's workers, and they must live elsewhere. The City is working on providing several other public parcels for housing, but the need is great and immediate and Tax Lot #700 is the opportunity before us. The housing needs analysis (HNA) found that over 2,000 units are needed within the next 20 years and approximately 1,000 of those units need to be at a price point that is affordable to a household of four earning at or below \$52,900 per year (at or below 80% AMI). In addition to the public need shown in the HNA, a recent Oregon economic analysis identifies Hood River County as being in the 90th percentile of least affordable rural counties in the COUNTRY with a price to income ratio greater than 3.7. Because the purpose of the rezone of Tax Lot 700 is to provide a parcel available for the development low income housing to meet this need, staff concludes that the public need for the re-zone of tax lot 700 has been justified.

We have also received testimony that the application by the City to rezone is illegal. It isn't. The Council has the right to rezone its own lands through the process of either a quasi-judicial or legislative zone change. Both require affirmative findings of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan along with findings required by HRMC chapter 17.08 – Quasi-Judicial Zone Changes. However the opponents take the position that the Comprehensive Plan Map is a document that was adopted and will not change. It will change, and has changed – about 40 times since 1990. The opponents assert that park land must remain as park land forever and that the Council lacks the legal authority to change the zone designation of parkland based upon a Comprehensive Plan policy that park lands will be protected. This is an incorrect interpretation of the Comprehensive Plan. In reality, this Goal 8 policy stands as a justification for protecting park lands from incompatible near-by uses, but it does not serve as a basis for concluding that the Council lacks the authority to de-designate parkland. This Goal 8 parkland protection policy applies to protect designated parks, unless the Council de-designates a particular park to a non-park zone or designation, based on factors and updated Comprehensive Plan reports identifying a greater need for a different use. Again, there is a public need for affordable housing and the Council has the legislative and policy-making authority to determine that this re-zone will allow our city to address this public need.

Many opponents attempt to make this a social issue, yes it is, but it's also a bit of a “not in my backyard issue”, too. The record contains testimony that talks about the isolated kids, the ghetto-like development, that all the low-income housing is concentrated in our neighborhood, and we will have no parks left in our neighborhood. The facts are that there are more multi-family units in the Heights than in the Wasco Street area. The fact is that most kids ride school buses, and that there are advantages to development on Wasco Street such as proximity to food stores, laundromat, CAT bus, pharmacies, and similar services and facilities, all within walking distance. The skate park is an additional park located across the street and will not disappear with this rezone, and there is still ample room for additional recreational and open space uses on the skate park property for use as a small neighborhood park with play equipment and benches. There is development potential to adding new uses to the skate park that will mitigate for the loss of Morrison Park for recreational and open space uses. In speaking with the Director of the Parks District, Mark Hickok, he would entertain a small neighborhood park area on the skate park property, with amenities such as swing set, seating, etc. with citizen support (See Attachment “C”).

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February 10, 2017

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[Via email cindy@ci.hood-river.or.us](mailto:cindy@ci.hood-river.or.us)

RE: Proposed zone change at Morrison Park
(from Open Space/Public Facilities to Urban High Density Residential, R-3)
City of Hood River Planning Dept. File No. 2016-37

Dear Ms. Walbridge:

Please accept this letter of support for the above-referenced proposed zone change. While I understand that many in Hood River passionately wish to keep Morrison Park's current use, I respectfully believe that the public benefit of changing this property's zoning to allow for the creation of critically needed affordable housing units is more important and valuable to the community than preserving its open space designation.

I have studied the Hood River housing market extensively over the last several years as I've explored building market rate apartments. I know all too well how difficult it is to find land, get financing and build apartments that make sense financially. This proposed rezoning is essential to providing more affordable units.

We are extremely fortunate to live in an area with an abundance of available outdoor recreational use alternatives and opportunities. On the other hand, we have an extreme lack of affordable housing options and this scarcity negatively impacts all of us. I share the opinion of many that creating more affordable housing units in Hood River should be among our community's highest priorities. And, if we believe this as a community, I feel we need to be able to make some sacrifices to allow its success.

The subject property is a decent park, but it would make (in my opinion) an excellent affordable housing site as it is walking distance to many of our town's employers and grocery stores, and the freeway's proximity to this site will have minimal adverse impacts

ATTACHMENT B

on the proposed use. Further, the site is, for the most part, buffered by industrial uses, I-84 and the Rotary Skate Park.

Respectfully,

David Simon

Google Maps Wasco St & N 20th St



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Wasco St & N 20th St
Hood River, OR 97031

----- approx
skatepark
boundary



ATTACHMENT C