

Dianne Cassidy . 3601 Wren Street . Lake Oswego, Oregon . 97034

Planning Commission
November 21, 2017

Comments Re: Zone Changes in the Southwest Employment Area

Why is someone requesting to change zones? Who initiated this request? What is the *need* for the zone change? Why is there a *need* to change this *now*? What has *changed* in a year and a half that requires a change in the Plan?

The Southwest Employment Area Plan was approved only about a year and a half ago. The Plan described the purpose of the Employment Area, and established land uses that were desirable for each sub-area of the district.

A "jewel" to be preserved

Throughout the planning process, and especially during the Planning Commission Hearings and discussions, the prevailing idea was that the area be kept as a light industrial "business park." One Commissioner described the retention of industrial component as a "jewel" in the city that needed to be treated carefully and preserved for IP uses. The SAC could not down-zone current commercial property, but wisely chose to preserve whatever land was still industrial. This was the Advisory Committee's recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council, and the Planning Commission and Council agreed.

Citizen Involvement

The recent citizen planning effort that was approved by the PC and Council is now in our Comprehensive Plan. To change it now demonstrates how little the City regards citizen input.

The SWEA Planning process was a sham. Intended changes to the basic tenets of the Plan shows that Citizen Involvement is just a starting place that is a state requirement. Once this piece is done, changes can be made to fit the *real* intent for the area.

The SWEA Plan was a puzzle with pieces that fit together intimately. The SAC considered land uses, traffic, stormwater, building siting, parking, retail, neighboring properties, etc. Any changes to one part of the plan will have an impact on the rest of the plan. Don't throw all of this work away.

Because of the callous nature of the City toward citizen input into land use decisions, only the naive will willingly waste their time on future advisory committees. How many times has the arduously created Comprehensive Plan been changed since it was approved in 2014? More than I can remember, and it's only been 3 1/2 years.

Who benefits from a zone change?

Changing from any other zone to GC gives a property the widest latitude for uses - everything from housing to a cocktail lounge - and thus raises its value substantially. What is the intent of the change to GC for the properties in question? Obviously someone (Planners, Council members, Administrators, developers, land owners) wants to see development there or make money off of up-zoned property.

Up-zoning land in the Stafford area to GC was tried by land owners (speculators) who would have benefited greatly, however the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners overturned the initial approval. While the GC zone may have been good for the land owners, it was not good for the County.

Who benefits from re-zoning land in the Southwest Employment Area?

Employment Centers and General Commercial Zones

The Southwest Employment Area is a Metro-designated Employment Center with rules about how it can be used. GC zoning does not fit the description of what an Employment Center requires. GC suggests that virtually any kind of business can be placed on the property. We know this is not true given the restrictions laid down by Metro, and the wording and intent of Lake Oswego's Southwest Employment Area Plan. In the IP zone, retail is ancillary to the industrial uses on the property and limited in size. Eateries are restricted to the commercial areas that exist now. Housing is limited to the commercial areas only. If the new properties are changed to GC, it would open them to other uses not intended for an Employment Area. If my assumptions are not correct, what is the purpose of the GC zone change?

SWEA, Lake Grove and I-5

The SAC rejected more commercial zoning in the SWEA because it did not want another draw away from the business and shopping district in Lake Grove. They also did not want to create destinations that would bring traffic from the freeway to the SWEA. An ODOT representative attended a couple of SAC meetings to tell the committee that the interchange at Lower Boones Ferry Rd. and I-5 was severely impacted now and they did not want to see more traffic through that intersection.

Money

There is more money to be made developing a GC property than an IP one. Developers and land owners would naturally benefit. So would the city. New development would yield a higher property tax for the city coffers which are in need of funds for PERS and other uses. In spite of who benefits financially, what would zoning (and uses within a zone) changes do for, or to, the citizens of the city? Is an increase in property taxes enough of a benefit to impact quality of life or change the trajectory of the future of the city? The citizens spoke to you through the SWEA Plan - all others agreed - therefore they should be your primary concern.

Land Use Creep

"No up-zoning" was what we heard during the Comprehensive Plan planning process. While some people promote increased density and others resist, this isn't an objection to development in the SWEA. That will happen over time. What is holding things back for now is that IP land has a lower value than GC, and some property owners are waiting until their property is worth more, or they enjoy doing business in the area as it is. There are several manufacturers who would like to expand their operations here but cannot find room in the area. I hope they stay!

By letting property owners and developers (and everyone else) know that LO is sticking by its 2016 SWEA Plan, it will give owners and speculators a certainty about what the future of the property is. If the line is crossed this time, "just" for these properties, there will be more efforts to change zoning in other nearby properties, all with a reasonable excuse. "Just" say no.

Planning Commission 4/11/16
LU 15-0077 - 1892
(CITY OF LAKE OSWEGO) FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & ORDER

Southwest Employment Area Plan

Pg. 5

The Comprehensive Plan, Civic Engagement, Policy 1 states that citizen involvement opportunities appropriate to the scale of a given planning effort should be provided, with opportunities for those affected to participate in the process.

Pg. 7

1 The Comprehensive Plan's definition of "employment centers" states:

2

3 "Although the focus is on employment, Employment Centers do allow mixed use:

4 limited retail, residential and commercial uses that are designed to support the

5 primary employment purpose and provide additional vibrancy to its daily activities

6 without supplanting each Center's primary employment focus." (Glossary, pg.

7 253).

8

9 The Commission finds that the majority of land in the Industrial Park zone should

10 be limited to retail sales that are accessory to products being manufactured,

11 processed or assembled on site, as those uses directly support the primary

12 employment purpose.