

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Public Hearing: Bascom Village

Meeting Date: November 21, 2011
Department: Planning & Development
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: 4
Staff Contact: Becky Wheeler
Contact Telephone Number: 541-682-5532

ISSUE STATEMENT

This public hearing is an opportunity for the public to provide testimony to the City Council on Bascom Village, a proposed 101-unit development affordable to those at or below 50 percent Area Median Income.

BACKGROUND

Bascom Village includes 101 units (comprising of 74 units with two or more bedrooms targeted to families and 27 units targeted to seniors, singles, and couples) and two community centers within 29 structures constructed in two phases (53 units in phase I and 48 in phase II). The 29 structures consist of 17 two-story townhome style duplexes, eight three-story apartment buildings, one single-story community center, two combination one- and two-story buildings, and one two-story community center that includes a classroom and five flats. The two-story buildings along Park View Drive are similar in height to the existing single- family homes in the Mountain Terrace subdivision, north of Park View Drive. The three-story buildings on the south property line are designed to be within the maximum height of 35 feet. Included on-site are two community centers, laundry facilities and several play areas. The first phase will be completed by St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County (SVDP), with the second developed by the Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA). Once complete, both phases will be managed by SVDP and include resident services delivered by SVDP. SVDP and HACSA formed a team of local professionals to design and develop Bascom Village. The design team includes Eugene-based companies, Bergsund DeLaney Architecture and Planning, P.C. and Meili Construction. SVDP and HACSA have strong development and property management track records. Both vigorously screen prospective tenants (in some cases, more so than market-rate owners).

Eugene Landbanking Program for Affordable Housing and Housing Dispersal Policy

The Landbanking Program for Affordable Housing has served as a cornerstone of Eugene's overall affordable housing program. The Landbanking Program was conceived as a way to address the need for affordable housing among low-income families. In 1968, the City Council adopted a broad platform through Resolution 1551, which formed an enduring foundation for Eugene's approach to affordable housing. The resolution included direction to purchase and landbank sites for low-income housing, to support the formation of nonprofit affordable housing developers, and to promote the dispersal of affordable housing throughout the community.

The Housing Dispersal Policy (HDP) is the tool used by the council to ensure affordable units are dispersed throughout the community. Originally adopted in 1968, the 1974 update to the HDP

emphasized the importance of landbanking as a way to facilitate the dispersal of affordable housing throughout the community.

The HDP only applies to the new development of family housing units and has three specific goals: 1) maximize housing choice for low-income families who have traditionally been limited in the location of housing they could afford; 2) discourage the creation of large areas characterized by low-income families; and 3) encourage the creation of additional housing integrated throughout the community for low-income families. The HDP includes two policies designed to achieve these goals:

Policy 1: The City encourages dispersal of low-income families, in subsidized housing, throughout the City. Public assistance for the construction of subsidized housing is discouraged in unsuitable areas. This policy may be balanced by the City Council against other City concerns and policies. [Unsuitable areas are defined in the document as census tract block groups where more than 50 percent of families are low-income and/or already have concentrations of subsidized housing that are greater than 20 percent of total housing units within the block group.]

Policy 2: The City discourages subsidized housing developments that are larger than 60 units. This policy may be balanced by the City Council against other City concerns and policies. [Subsidized housing units are defined in the document as permanent newly constructed rental housing, for low-income families]

Due to concerns raised at the Housing Policy Board (HPB) public hearing in September, the HPB delayed making a final recommendation to the council and added a tour of affordable housing sites (October 12), community forum (October 26), and an additional public hearing (November 9). The HPB also extended its written comment period to November 9 formalized its recommendation to the City Council on November 14. The City Council held a work session to discuss the HPB recommendation on November 16. At that meeting, the council directed staff to schedule a public hearing on November 21. Action is scheduled to occur on November 28.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

The proposed project supports multiple City priorities and policies including the Eugene-Springfield 2010 Consolidated Plan, Growth Management Policies, and the Housing Dispersal Policy.

Eugene-Springfield 2010 Consolidated Plan - This plan identifies a need for affordable housing for low-income persons and sets a five-year goal of developing 500 new units of affordable housing. The proposed project directly supports the objective by creating 101 units for low-income families and individuals.

Eugene Adopted Growth Management Policies - The City of Eugene affordable housing development programs and Bascom Village support multiple Growth Management Policies.

Housing Dispersal Policy - The City Council has established a Housing Dispersal Policy which seeks to maximize housing choices for low-income families and integrate housing throughout the City of Eugene.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

No formal action is required at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

This is a public hearing only; no action is required on this item.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None; action on this item is scheduled for November 28.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Housing Policy Board Letter, dated November 15, 2011

Please refer to attachments distributed with November 16 work session agenda.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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HOUSING POLICY BOARD
Eugene  Lane County  Springfield  HACSA

Date: Tuesday, November 15, 2011
To: Mayor and City Council
From: J. Norton Cabell, Chair, Intergovernmental Housing Board
Re: Bascom Village

At its Monday meeting, the Housing Policy Board voted to recommend the city move ahead with the transfer of the landbank site on County Farm Road and the related HOME funds and SDC waivers to enable St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Housing Authority to build the proposed 101- unit affordable housing complex. The vote was 7 in favor, one opposed (Commissioner Sid Leiken), and one abstention (Councilor Chris Pryor).

The decision was made after much neighborhood input, most of it opposing the project. Neighborhood opposition to affordable housing projects is not new (we recall the opposition to Woodleaf Village in 1993 and to Hilyard Terrace in 1999). Once it became aware of the level of opposition, the Board provided a tour of similar developments, held a two-hour Q&A meeting at Sheldon Community Center, then an additional public hearing (also at Sheldon).

At our meeting on Monday, we discussed in an almost two hour meeting the factors the opponents cited to support their opposition. Those factors and arguments include:

- Process—we didn't give the neighbors enough notice
- Traffic—the development will increase traffic on nearby streets
- Emergency response—police and fire won't be able to get there quickly enough
- Access to services—the bus is too far away; there aren't sidewalks on the way to the bus stop.
- Schools—neighborhood schools are already too crowded
- Density—the city's housing dispersal policy is being violated

The Board discussed each of those (and others), considering whether any one of them (or the totality of several of them) should dictate that the project not be built at all or be substantially re-worked.

Ultimately, we decided to recommend proceeding with the project. The Board's major concerns centered on distance to the bus, the lack of sidewalks, and the density issue.

Some of the concerns may well be ameliorated as the project moves forward (it will be over two years before actual occupancy can begin; City staff is already working on the sidewalk issue). Perhaps the most contentious issue is that of density and the housing dispersal policy.

We felt a number of factors support the proposed density: the great need for affordable housing in Eugene, the plan designation and zoning (which would actually allow as many as 162 units), the density being no greater than similar projects the City has supported, and the efficiencies of scale in both financing and managing such a project.

Most of us also felt the project does not violate the housing dispersal policy: the 74 proposed "family" units exceeds the policy's aspirational goal of 60, but the size of the site (almost 6 acres) and the other factors just cited more than balance that.

We urge you to approve the Bascom Village project.