

Sisters Woodlands Development – Public Hearing 11/10/2021

Comments submitted by Patricia Cusick, 14461 Pole Ct, Sisters

11/10/2021

Site Plan – First, I applaud and fully appreciate the considerable efforts the Woodlands design team has taken to preserve the very significant ponderosa trees on this site. More importantly, through creative lot configurations, shared open spaces, small “pocket parks”, the site plan protects natural groves of mature trees, enhancing the treescape and tree survival, rather than isolating lone trees which are much more susceptible to construction damage and wind/weather damage. This is the first development design plan I’ve seen that truly values the natural landscape that defines Sisters, with real care and consideration to integrate the development into the surrounding environment. I hope the City and Planning Commission take whatever action needed to continue this significant design shift for future development.

Regarding the requested variances/alterations on a few lots, even better benefits could be realized if 2 or 3 residences can be eliminated to increase/enhance the open space, tree survival and overall livability in what will be a very dense neighborhood.

What doesn’t fit is a large block of 112 apartments lining the entry to Sisters. There is no way to make the size of 50-64 unit buildings align with preserving our highly valued “small town character”, a very clear community priority in the just completed 2021 update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the lengthy, community-wide Sisters Country Visioning process. For neighborhood scale and preserving community character and aesthetics, HALF this number of apartments is much more appropriate. For example, something like the 3 story, 9-unit apartments behind Ray’s (total of 51 apts split between 6 buildings) achieved increased density while blending fairly well with the neighborhood look and feel.

“Workforce Housing” – Though I understand this goal, our local real estate market has shown cramming density does not assure “affordability”. What’s to stop prices from quickly skyrocketing? Are employers like Laird considering owning some of these residences/leasing to employees? How else can workforce housing be achieved, vs. this new construction turning into vacation homes, vacation rentals, Airbnbs?

Commercial space – There’s also the question of any need for extending commercial/retail space beyond downtown. A casual walk along Hood and Cascade avenues shows 16 empty commercial spaces, some of which could house 2 or 3 small businesses (e.g. Ken Scott’s former gallery), and a new commercial building in the works for the corner Hood & Spruce. That’s not counting available space in the rest of downtown business district, 2nd story spaces that may be empty, more commercial space currently under construction behind Bi-Mart, and more to

come with Three Peaks 14 new industrial lots across the street from Woodlands, and continuing buildout of Sun Ranch and Lundgreen Mill Drive light industrial lots.

While I support the developer's considered efforts to balance current housing needs, square footage and financial profits with preserving the natural landscape, 361 residences, especially the apartment complex, is too dense to preserve the character of Sisters and to meet the just established long term plan for our city. And given current circumstances, spreading additional commercial development away from the city's core can only hurt the long-term viability of downtown businesses.

Notes and cautions about the proposed Woodland development.

Alley easement and use: All of the alleyway drawings include a bike lane designation, an attempt to divert bike traffic away from the main streets. However, it is clear that all the private vehicles (cars and trucks) in the whole development are expected to be entering and exiting garages from those same alleyways. This creates the potential for serious accidents when drivers are not able to see oncoming bikes as they back vehicles out of driveways. It also creates hazards when children are confined to alleyway play areas, where many motorized vehicles are moving to and from arterial streets.

While additional housing is an important goal of the 2040 Comp Plan and the Sisters Country Vision, creating a subdivision of this density does not maintain the small town feel and connectivity that Sisters' residents have repeatedly said they want to maintain. What measures have been considered to mitigate the threat of fire to such densely packed and populated neighborhoods? Are fire safe building materials being used in construction? If so, how do these houses and apartments stay "affordable"? What ensures that these new townhomes and cottages won't be sold to the highest bidder and become Air B&B ghettos, rather than housing for our Sisters' permanent population.

This proposed development is too big and too densely packed to fit the "vision" we have for Sisters. It negatively impacts traffic for residents and visitors, creates a strain on already taxed and limited water resources (especially with long term forecasts of extended drought and low snowpack) and increases the threat of wildland fires becoming devastating urban fires.

The proposed retail space facing Hwy 20 looks like a big wall. Sisters already has a "wall" at the east end of town, which does nothing to enhance the appeal of our town for people who are coming to shop, recreate or conduct business. We don't need a solid wall of retail space lining the west entrance – mimicking every uninspired strip mall and tacky signed commercial row in every town USA. Why would we do that to our town? We like to think of Sisters as "special", a place people like to visit. If the entrance to Sisters ends up looking like every other business lined retail mall, how does that make us "different"? Let's try harder to preserve what we love and not repeat the mistakes that other towns make in the pursuit of profit.

There are other areas of concern, but as a layman, resident and concerned citizen, I don't have the time or expertise to technically challenge the long traffic reports and transportation and water use documents. I just know it doesn't "feel" like Sisters, and does nothing to preserve the natural environment or reflect our vision of a more livable small town.

Dixie Eckford
288 West St Helens,
Sisters, OR 97759
541 639-5888

Hi,

I recently moved to Central Oregon from the Seattle metropolitan area and have been struggling to find a house within my budget (\$750k) that can fit my family. The struggle is the low inventory, which in return increase's the cost (supply and demand!). It would make more sense for me to purchase a house in Portland, Eugene, Salem, etc. and commute, rather than purchase a house in Sisters! I hope future development within Sisters can expand and offer more affordable options; we love the community in Central Oregon and would love to live here! Due to the low inventory in Sisters, my family and I, ended up in Prineville, OR (50 minutes).

Thanks,

TJ

November 8, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I have lived and worked in Sisters for the last 16 years. My Son graduated from Sisters HS in 2015.

I was lucky enough to rent an affordable home for the last 13 years. Unfortunately, my landlord recently passed away and his children decided to turn it into an Air BNB. After a frantic search to find another place, I was able to get into a small duplex in town. I was very concerned I would have to leave Sisters. I have been looking for a bigger place that better suits my needs but have not been able to afford or find one.

It is my dream to buy a house in the town I have called home for the last 16 years. I see this new development as my only hope. Working for Laird Superfood for the last 4 years has changed my life in so many ways. It has allowed me to have a career that I love in a place that I love and finally make enough money to afford a house. Before this job I was working several seasonal jobs to makes ends meet.

Please approve this project so locals can have a chance to own a home and raise their families in this beautiful place.

Thank You

8 November, 2021

Sisters Woodlands Project: Comments

The project to develop the 31 acres of land at 201 N Pine Street, Sisters for mixed housing and industrial use must be rejected. This project, which would result in some 359 residential units and 44,000 square feet of commercial and light industrial space, is tantamount to building a small town in the middle of Sisters. It would dramatically alter, indeed, destroy, the character of the city. It would fly in the face of certain critical provisions of the city's master plan. For example, it would nullify the city's goal "to conserve, and enhance the quality of the City's natural and scenic resources; maintain the quality of its air, land, water, and wildlife habitat; and improve community health." Among other things, the "Woodlands" project would in fact eviscerate the woodlands on the acreage and obliterate whatever natural beauty and habitat there are left in the city. Moreover, the project would inject some 600-700 vehicles into Sisters, with their accompanying pollution. When these vehicles are combined with those associated with the housing under construction next to the Dollar Store and from the industries being enticed to move to the lots north of the project, not to mention "normal" traffic through town, the result will be paralysis on the streets. The fact that the developer is including parking space in the project for the expected vehicles is NOT a solution. The problem begins when these vehicles start to move. Tourists are already complaining about the traffic in Sisters. Who wants to visit a traffic jam? The "Woodlands" project will make a mockery of Sisters as a "tourist destination." In addition, and this is extremely important, the development will require an enormous amount of water which will be extracted from our aquifer. We are in the middle of a drought. The city has had to drill wells to meet water requirements. How will the developer replenish the lost ground water? He can't. Paying a fee for water is NOT a solution. The residents of Sisters will pay the real price. In short, the "Woodlands" project would be a catastrophe. Its approval would be completely irresponsible if not suicidal for Sisters. It must be rejected.

Gary Leiser, Sisters

Leiser.gary@gmail.com

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Leiser". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and email address.