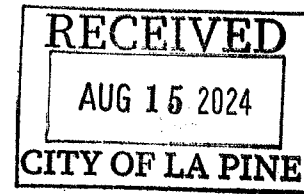


August 15, 2024

Teri Myers
Chair of Planning Commission
Re: Proposed Habitat for Humanity Townhomes



Dear Madam Chair:

Thank you very much for your cordial reception and patience with the Crescent Creek homeowners who appeared at the August 7th meeting. Many of us at that meeting had just heard of the Habitat project and were eager to understand the planning commission process. This project is of great concern to us because we have seen the outcome of similar projects. One need simply drive by some of these established projects to gain an objective view of what lies ahead for Crescent Creek homeowners. Roughly 40% of those homeowners show pride of ownership with kempt yards and other exterior maintenance and might be good neighbors. Sadly, the other 60% have overgrown yards, piles of trash, furniture items and all manner of junk strewn about. These homeowners clearly have no regard for their property or the impact their neglect has on their neighbors. I hope the Planning Commission and City Council will not demonstrate similar disregard for Crescent Creek homeowners by approving this proposal that would so closely interconnect these 34 townhomes with existing homes via roads and a tiny greenspace that were not built for this scale.

I have heard discussions of how to lessen the impact with a fence and signs and enforcing rules. I bought into that idea many years ago and life taught me that there is no mitigating a certain kind of mindset. My husband and I had a neighbor who refused to maintain their property. When we attempted to sell our property, my husband mowed their yard for a year, stepping in dog waste and maneuvering around an old sewing machine, barrels of beer bottles and other junk they declined to haul away. Instead of repairing a window, they boarded it up. When a hurricane was forecast, they cross-taped their windows with blue tape and then never removed it. Our realtor suggested we paint their house so we could sell ours. When we finally sold our home, we did so at great loss.

My husband and I purchased our home on Masten Mill Dr in 2022 and reasonably expected that our home would hold its value. At that time, we were told by the realtors that custom homes were going to be built precisely where the 34 Habitat townhomes are now proposed. We are unclear about how such a drastic change occurred, but we are certain this project will have a devastating impact on our neighborhood and our home values.

Crescent Creek is a quiet neighborhood with residents that take good care of their yards. We are not wealthy people. At least one third of us are aged 55 and older. We recognize that many people in Central Oregon struggle with our high cost of living. We seniors have the added burden of increasing health challenges, rising medical expenses and a decreasing income. I am an older health care provider who works extensively with seniors struggling to maintain their independence as they undergo physical and cognitive decline. I know this terrain well. We face surgeries, hospitalizations, expensive procedures and expensive medications that are not fully covered by insurance. These challenges come sooner than most people anticipate and cost much more than anyone expects. Costs will pile up year after year while our income remains fixed. We will draw from our savings and at some point, we will need our home equity to fund our later years. This is a hard truth that deserves to be acknowledged by the Planning Commission and City Council.

The great thing about being an older adult is that we have a wealth of life experience and are pretty good at problem solving. We have the time to do research, serve on committees, advocate for smart policies and support elected officials who engage in wise decision making. We care about our community and are often available to help when asked.

Although I have written about my demographic, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the young families and middle-aged members of our neighborhood that worked very hard to save for their down payment and continue to work every day to provide for their family. This project will have a devastating impact on everyone in Crescent Creek and neighboring developments.

We at Crescent Creek hold Habitat for Humanity in high regard and want to see smart development for lower income families. We believe there are better locations for these townhomes, perhaps near Rosland School, where infrastructure already exists and there is easy access to U.S. 97 for their work commute. Research studies indicate that kids who live near schools do better in math.

We want to see our officials make wise development decisions in our growing City of La Pine. We want stable home values that provide tax revenue to serve our entire community. We believe this project location is bad for La Pine. We believe it will facilitate a downward spiral of declining home values with declining tax revenue as well as lead businesses and builders to go elsewhere. This downward spiral will further embed the derogatory attitude many in Sunriver and Bend have for residents of La Pine. I wonder if the Planning Commission and Council members think about the impact this sort of negative bias has on opportunities for our residents and development in our area. Conversely, if officials that believe in our potential to be a nice yet affordable place to live would wisely guide our growth - there would be more opportunities for everyone, especially the lower income families that Habitat seeks to help.

Madam Chair, I am pleading with you to advocate for our seniors' retirement nest eggs and the investments of my fellow homeowners by voting Nay and encouraging your fellow commission members and City Council to do the same. Please help shepherd our community toward a brighter path.

Respectfully,

Victoria D'Auteuil

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