

March 6, 2006

Mayor Taylor and Salem City Council
555 Liberty Street SE
Salem, OR 97302

Mayor Taylor and Councilors,

Re: City Review of Land Use Policies

We note with interest the article in the March 5, 2006, Statesman-Journal regarding Salem's land use planning and, in particular, the reference to Fairview and the scheduled discussion at your March 6 Council meeting.

As a group of community investors, Sustainable Fairview Associates came together six years ago to pursue innovations in land use planning and development that are now finding dramatic market success in communities across the country. Whether it is called smart growth, new urbanism, or sustainable development, the creation of walkable, mixed-use development is capturing the imagination of consumers, builders and developers throughout America.

The City of Salem has played a critical role in facilitating the redevelopment of the Fairview Training Center along these lines. However, we want to make it clear that this process was only financially viable for Fairview because of the large scale of the project and the commitment of the investors and owners to persist with the planning and paperwork to achieve these goals. Sustainable Fairview spent inordinate amounts of time and money on attorneys, architects, planners, and engineers to help craft new plans and standards to be applied to our project. Small projects simply cannot justify the expense; therefore they will rarely happen without effective public policies in place to support them.

As we all know, developers and builders create housing and commercial buildings within the context of established ordinances and policies. For sixty years these ordinances and policies have effectively mandated distinct areas of segregated use - single-family housing, multi-family housing, commercial and industrial uses. These areas were planned to be linked primarily by single family automobile traffic.

If the community of Salem wants to attract new residents and businesses with housing and transportation choice, with attractive and livable neighborhoods, if we want to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business, we certainly need to integrate our land use and transportation planning. Smaller projects cannot live with uncertainty. Neighborhoods will not develop, or redevelop, unless residents, builders and developers are certain that the public policy framework is in place to justify investment.

Sustainable Fairview Associates strongly believes that Salem is a wonderful dynamic community that will benefit from mixed-use projects. The best way to assure those projects get built is to create public policies that support them through commercial design standards and designated locations linked by convenient means of transportation. Our position is that "minimal planning" will never promote good development. On the other hand, good planning will promote good development - and a dynamic community.

We want to thank you for your efforts on behalf of Fairview and we look forward to the implementation of dynamic new neighborhoods in Salem.

Sincerely,

Sam Hall
Sustainable Fairview Associates, LLC