



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 12, 2009

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Carolyn Weiss, Metro and Community Planning

Subject: COUNCIL ASSIGNMENT RESPONSE: COST OF NEIGHBORHOOD REFINEMENT PLANS

A council work session on the Neighborhood Empowerment Council Goal was held on December 8, 2008. During that work session, Councilor Zelenka requested information on the cost of producing neighborhood refinement plans. This memo answers that question and provides information on the emerging Neighborhood Action Plan program.

Neighborhood Refinement Plans

The last refinement plans updated within Eugene's jurisdiction were the Whiteaker Plan in 1994 (16 years after the original plan was adopted), and the Downtown Plan in 2003 (19 years after the original adoption). Eight of the other existing neighborhood refinement plans have not been updated for more than 24 years while many neighborhoods have no refinement plan at all. Clearly, a more sustainable approach is desired by the council, community and staff, to create and keep neighborhood planning tools current. The neighborhoods have discussed this through their summit and empowerment initiative work, the council has discussed it, and the Planning Director has included this item in her annual work program that comes to you each year.

The Whiteaker Refinement Plan update is the most recent update of a residential neighborhood refinement plan, but because it occurred 14 years ago, we do not have current or reliable cost figures. To estimate the cost of a neighborhood refinement plan update would require some specificity on the scope of the update, and on the type and scale of public involvement. Without those specifics, we can only guess that the order of magnitude of cost would be in the **hundreds of thousands of dollars** for each neighborhood plan.

Neighborhood Action Plans

In spite of the daunting and costly task of redoing (or doing) all neighborhood refinement plans, the Planning Division has taken actions to address the need. With funding approved by Council under the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative, a Neighborhood Planner was hired in the fall of 2008 to focus on producing the "next generation" of neighborhood/community plans, called "Neighborhood Action Plans". One of the primary goals in moving this project forward is for the work to be done in a sustainable and equitable manner. As such, staff has researched precedents from other cities and found a process model from the City of Vancouver Washington that addresses these concerns. The Vancouver model empowers neighborhood groups to initiate

the planning process themselves and to progress at their own rate, with staff acting as a facilitator.

Staff is modifying the program and tailoring it to Eugene's specific needs by producing a guide and template for neighborhood/community groups to follow. Staff will assist groups as they move through the process with the creation of specialized trainings, tool development, and individual assistance. Neighborhoods that have fewer resources to contribute to the process will be given additional assistance. The project scope is still being formulated and will continue to be refined as it is shared more broadly with neighborhood representatives and leaders as well as cross departmental City staff.

Needs Assessments

A needs assessment that identifies and prioritizes the needs and desires of a broad representation of individuals within each neighborhood is envisioned as a keystone of the planning process. Priority issues may vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, and could include a wide-range of topics such as traffic management, housing, natural resources, community building, land use, historic preservation, parks, public safety, and economic development. The needs assessment can be periodically updated to keep current with neighborhood priorities.

The existence of neighborhood based needs assessments has multiple benefits including:

- Prioritization of neighborhood needs;
- Informing City budget decisions on a neighborhood basis;
- Directing the work program for City services to be more responsive to neighborhood issues;
- Setting a foundation for potential grant funding;
- Cataloging land use issues and identifying the most efficient and effective course of action for resolution.

Land Use Issues

It is not presumed that land use will be the primary issue for all neighborhoods. However, for those neighborhoods where it is the primary issue, the goal will be to clearly identify the specific issues and then determine what the appropriate tool for addressing that issue may be. Potential avenues may include:

- Plugging into existing processes such as Infill Compatibility Standards, Opportunity Siting or Mixed Use Centers;
- Land Use Code amendments;
- Metro Plan amendments;
- Specific area refinement plans;
- Incentives and other tools yet to be defined.

Broad Neighborhood Involvement

Several steps will be required in the process to ensure a broad level of participation by neighborhood stakeholders. These steps include a requirement to create a neighborhood planning committee that represents the demographic interests of the neighborhood, including businesses and community organizations. Additionally, an outreach plan that requires substantial notification and neighborhood involvement efforts will be required and approved by staff. These steps have the added benefit of further empowering neighborhoods by expanding the base of residents and other stakeholders that are involved in neighborhood issues.

These Neighborhood Action Plans are intended to be action oriented, easily updateable, integrated into City-wide systems, and based on a framework of collaborative problem solving. Staff will be providing regular updates to you on this project via memos in your packet.