



## Memorandum

**To:** Carole Connell, Planner, City of Gearhart  
**From:** Li Alligood, AICP, Senior Planner  
**Copies:** Bill Palmberg  
**Date:** October 2, 2018  
**Subject:** Response to comments received during 9/13/18 Planning Commission hearing  
**Project No.:** 68150

This memo responds to questions asked and concerns raised during the September 13, 2018, Planning Commission hearing on the requested zone change for the Palmberg property.

Generally, community concerns included:

- Concerns about changes to the neighborhood character
- Traffic impacts of new development on surrounding roads
- Development impacts on existing McCormick road drainage issues
- Status of site remediation

Each of these items is addressed below.

### ***Neighborhood Character***

Though the site is located at the edge of the city limits, it is also located next door to an established commercial area and is about ½ mile via McCormick Gardens Rd and Pacific Way from Hwy 101 and the retail and commercial services located there. Future residents of the site (and existing residents of the neighborhood to the east) could be able to walk ¾ miles to City Hall via the bicycle and pedestrian connections envisioned by the City's Transportation System Plan. The combination of natural appeal and access to the highway and downtown make this a very appropriate location for additional housing units and provides a transition between the commercial development to the west and the rural residential development to the east.

The site is currently vacant, and the wildlife drawn by the pond and wetlands is enjoyed by many neighbors. It is true that any development of this site, under either the current zoning or requested zoning and whether with one house or many, will change the immediate area and will introduce new residents to the neighborhood. However, there are some key site characteristics will remain in place regardless of how many housing units are built there: the wetlands around the edges of the site and the pond adjacent to Pacific Way are protected from development; and development will be limited to the area previously used for paving company activities. In fact, new development will be at least 850 ft. from Pacific Way, at least 250 ft. from the northern property line, and at least 300 ft. from the western property line (Railroad Ave). For comparison, existing buildings to the east and south are between 20 and 150 ft. from the property lines. New buildings would be subject to the same height limits as the RA zone (30 ft.). In combination with height restrictions, the wetlands and pond around the perimeter of the site will soften visual impacts of development.

### ***Traffic Impacts***

As noted in the March 22, 2018, Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) prepared by Access Engineering, new development on the site will result in additional traffic on Pacific Way. The conceptual site plan has proposed access from

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McCormick Gardens Road, using already improved roadways. This access meets the City's policies and regulations related to the zone change, but future development would require upgrades to both streets to add travel lanes, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities to accommodate increased usage.

Railroad Ave is also a public right-of-way and could provide alternative access to the site. Future development on the site may consider alternative access points to reduce traffic on Pacific Way and McCormick Gardens Road. However, Railroad Avenue is currently unimproved and use of that street for access would add significant cost to the development of the site and may cause additional issues because of its proximity to Hwy 101.

The TIA compares a "worst-case" traffic generation scenario with the existing site. Because the site is currently vacant, almost any other use will result in an increase in traffic. The TIA calculates the number of "peak hour" trips that would be generated from a "worst-case" scenario. "Peak hour" trips are those trips that occur during normal commuting hours when traffic levels are highest; the "worst case scenario" is the highest possible intensity of development under the proposed zoning but does *not* necessarily reflect a feasible or desirable development. The goal is to demonstrate what would happen to the function of existing intersections if the worst-case scenario occurred.

The current zoning contemplates development of 7 houses on the site, or 1 per acre. The traffic generated by the "worst-case scenario" development on the site was evaluated against the amount of traffic that would be generated by 7 houses and the level of service established by the Gearhart Transportation System Plan. The TIA determined that the "worst-case" scenario of 52 housing units would generate 48 trips during the AM peak hour (7:45 to 8:45am) and would generate 70 trips during PM peak hour (3:30 to 4:30pm), and that the peak hour trips would not impact the subject intersections more than development under the existing RA zone would. See Table 7 of the TIA.

#### **McCormick Gardens Road Drainage**

Several members of the public expressed concern about drainage issues on McCormick Gardens Road. This road is a two-lane road under Clatsop County jurisdiction but is included in the Gearhart Transportation Plan.

While it is difficult to predict future drainage patterns, any development on the site will be required to retain runoff on-site – the amount of runoff from the site will not increase from what it is today. In some situations, drainage issues decrease with development because runoff from the site is reduced. Further modeling and studies would be needed before development happens on the site.

#### **Status of Site Remediation**

The site was previously used by the Palmberg Paving Company. In 2002, the Palmbergs contacted the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to and entered the DEQ's Voluntary Cleanup Program and conducted site testing. After reviewing the testing results, the DEQ determined that the site was safe for industrial and occupational (employment) uses in 2004 and issued a No Further Action (NFA) determination.

In 2006, the Palmbergs requested additional review to determine whether the site was safe for residential uses. In 2007, the DEQ issued a second NFA determination deeming the site safe for residential use but noted that there were some remaining areas of contamination on tax lot 1000. The NFA states that soil transported off-site from tax lot 1000 must be evaluated and managed, which is consistent with management of contaminated soils. Excavation of the development area of the site will be required to allow compaction of the subgrade for preparation for construction of buildings. The soil excavated from the delineated area of tax lot 1000 can be transported off-site to a disposal site or could potentially be retained on-site and treated.