

To: Mayor Gary Wheeler and Medford City Council

August 6, 2015

From: James F. Hays, 520 N. Bartlett St., Medford OR

Re: Urban Growth Boundary Amendment Process

A BIG MISTAKE

Mister Mayor and Members of the City Council, thank you for providing this opportunity to share our thoughts on an important topic. My name is Jim Hays and I am a member of the Medford Congregational Church, whom you have heard from earlier on the topics of Livability and Affordable Housing. I am here to address a more specific concern I have with the process.

In May of this year the City Planning Commission considered a proposed Amendment to the Urban Growth Boundary prepared by the professional Department staff. This proposal was a carefully thought out plan that assessed lands using several objective criteria to find the best mix of acres to promote orderly and efficient development. But then the Commission, by a margin of 4 to 3, voted to make some not so minor changes to that proposal.

Acres were removed: First, to address some accounting errors that caused the number of required acres to be initially overstated, 175 acres were removed from the proposed boundary. Acres removed were in MD's 3 and 4. And acres were added: another 155 acres were removed to make room for the addition of 180 acres belonging to a single land owner and developer who had lobbied successfully to have his holdings included within the UGB, near the north eastern edge of MD -5.

This, to my mind was most inappropriate and a step in just the wrong direction. These acres are not at all near any existing development and received very low scores during the staff evaluation for potential water and sewer connection and for transportation considerations. And they would continue a developmental trend, already well under way, that runs just counter to any consideration of affordable housing. The Mahar homes currently being built on Cherry Lane and vicinity are far from the ideal neighborhood concept our Church would support and represent a poor use of finite resources in an age of shrinking possibilities. More such development in this location would clearly violate the stated goals of the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element. Specifically Policy 2 calls for "conveniently located residential development" close to pedestrian, bicycle or transit routes and other facilities. Policy 3 states that the City shall strive for a "compact urban form". None of this would be advanced with the inclusion and development of the acres in question.

And apparently some three members of the Planning Commission agreed that it was not that good an idea.

I am therefore respectfully requesting that the City partly reverse the decision of May 14, reinstate some of the acres that had been removed, and leave those 180 acres out, as originally proposed. That should be fairly easy to accomplish.