
From: Roger Bell <rbofrbjb52@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, November 4, 2023 4:18 PM
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Deanna Gwyn
Subject: Public Hearing comment on Code Amendment Case No. CA23-04

My name is Roger Bell, I live in Ward 4.

Regarding: Code Amendment Case No. CA23-04 - Code amendment to implement climate friendly and equitable communities parking lot requirements and allow single-room occupancy housing more broadly.

Statement in Opposition to approval.

My objection:

There are two separate items being combined into one approve/disapprove case. Each item merits it's own discussion and consideration. That alone should prompt the council to send this case back to the planning commission with direction to resubmit as two separate cases. If the council elects to consider these two items as submitted, I strongly feel that the single-room occupancy zoning change is neither necessary nor appropriate and should necessitate a no vote on this case. As stated in the Notice of Public Hearing, the justification for this change is based on "recently-approved State legislation aimed at allowing single-room occupancy housing more broadly in Oregon communities". There is no ruling or mandate that can be referenced requiring this overreaching action.

My definitions for reference:

Citizens – people who work in Salem, have a home in Salem, pay taxes in Salem.

Vagrants – people who have no established residence and wander from place to place without lawful or visible means of support.

My concern:

If this were allowed to happen, established houses could, and most likely would, be bought by "investors" from outside the city, outside the county and even outside the state. These family houses would be converted to room-for-rent establishments (or as they were called in the old days – flop houses). If the investors expect to get a reasonable return on their money, they will have to charge rates that would be at least comparable to local hotels and motels. We have hotels and motels located throughout the city that meet the current zoning rules set in place for safe operation. That begs the question - why change the zoning rules and disrupt neighborhoods? First thought that comes to my mind - the backroom purpose for these flop houses is to provide rooms for vagrants currently occupying the streets, parks and other public areas of the city. But what about the cost for the room; they can't afford it anymore than they can afford a hotel or motel. The landmine - their rooms would be subsidized by the city through funding routed from the general fund – citizen paid taxes. My gut feeling is that the latter is more correct. Either way, this would be the beginning of the end for family neighborhoods throughout the city. Salem has a multitude of housing options within our neighborhoods – apartments, condos, row houses, fourplexes, duplexes, and the ever popular single family home. A neighborhood is where families live, children play, people feel safe and watch out for each other. I don't believe it is in the best interest of the citizens of Salem to consider such a potentially dangerous idea, and since the safety and well being of the citizens is supposed to be a mandatory priority in all business conducted by the city, this cannot be allowed to move forward.

Parable to ponder:

Providing vagrants a flop house in a family populated neighborhood would be tantamount to releasing a cougar in the forest next to a ranch – the cougar may not bother any people or livestock, but then again it might. It doesn't matter how lofty the ideal, it's not a risk any intelligent person would be willing to take.