

March 28, 2022

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#### VIA EMAIL

Salem City Council 555 Liberty Street SE, Room 220 Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Applicant's Final Written Argument; Meyer Farm Subdivision (City Case No. SUB21-09)

Dear Mayor Bennett and Councilors:

This office represents Kehoe Northwest Properties LLC (the "**Applicant**"), in the above-referenced application (the "**Application**"). On March 9, 2022, the Applicant proposed a condition of approval and revised subdivision plan for the Council's reconsideration. The Council allowed reconsideration on March 14 and re-opened the record until March 21 for any person to respond to the Applicant's revised proposal. Pursuant to ORS 197.797(6)(e), the following is the Applicant's final written argument on this matter. The letter is respectfully submitted prior to the end of the final written argument period at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 28, 2022. Please note that it addresses public comments made available to the Applicant by March 21, 2022.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

On February 28, 2022 the City Council tentatively voted to deny the Application due to its removal of 17 significant trees. Prior to the City Council's deliberations, the Applicant had received consistent and repeated staff support for its Tree Conservation Plan (to which SRC 808.035(d)(2) applies), which is a Type 1 application that is not part of the subdivision Application, and is not before the Council in this subdivision application. The City Council's deliberation was the Applicant's first notice that it had not, in the City's view, satisfied SRC 808.035(d)(2). ORS 197.522(3) provides the Applicant a right to offer a condition of approval to satisfy the applicable development standards. Pursuant to that statute, the Applicant proposed a condition of approval preserving all but 6 of the 64 identified significant trees, resulting in a significant tree preservation rate of 94%. **Exhibit 1**.

The amended proposed Meyer Farm Subdivision (the "**Project**") would divide the existing Meyer Farm property in 125 lots, reduced from 138, while preserving the existing farmhouse, accessory buildings, and 4.87 acres, increased from 3.64 acres. **Exhibit 1**. The Application satisfies all applicable criteria and there is no dispute in the record, nor any substantial evidence, that the Application does not satisfy all applicable criteria and standards. On this basis, the Council should approve the Application.

#### II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the reasons that follow, the Applicant respectfully asks the Council to approve the Application.

- This is a limited-land use housing development application. Therefore, the Council is required by law to approve the Application if it satisfies all clear and objective criteria set forth in the Salem Revised Code.
- The Applicant has heard the concerns of the neighborhood and City Council regarding the preservation of significant trees, and has been willing to provide more information, including updating its tree inventory twice. The Applicant and its team has spent a great deal of time to revise the plan in order to address the Council's concerns. The revised plan reflects the City Council's preference and does not propose to remove any significant trees solely for the purpose of creating a building envelope. The proposed revision reduces removal of significant trees from 17 under the original plan to only 6 under the revised plan. **Exhibit 1**.
- As explained during the hearing, it is not feasible to meaningfully relocate Hilfiker Lane
  as part of this proposal, and it is also not possible to preserve a significant tree in a
  public utility easement, which provides power and telecommunications for each home.
- No matter how the Meyer Farm property is ultimately developed, it will not be possible to preserve the significant trees within 12<sup>th</sup> street. Two of the trees are located within or on the boundary of the existing public right-of-way, and SRC 803.040 requires boundary streets to be dedicated and fully improved to City Standards. For a local street such as 12th Street, this means a 30-foot right-of-way dedication and a half-street paved improvement with curbs, sidewalks, and street lights. These improvements are not optional because none of the exceptions to this requirement listed in 803.040(d) pertain to the Project.
- The Applicant has volunteered to construct speed bumps on Albert Drive SE to address neighborhood concerns about pass-through traffic and traffic speed, even though doing so was not identified as a requires mitigation measure in the Applicant's traffic study or by City engineering staff.

#### III. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES ALL APPLICABLE CRITERIA

For the following reasons, as well as those in the Staff Report(s), the Applicant's prior testimony, and February 21, 2022 final written argument, the Council should find that the Application satisfies all applicable criteria.

The only identified issue with code compliance appears to be SRC 808.035(d)(2), which Applicant addresses in this argument. SRC 808.035(d)(2) is an approval criterion for a Type I Tree Conservation Plan, not for a subdivision application, and is not an applicable criterion for

this Application. Thus, the Council cannot not deny the Application simply because it finds that SRC 808.035(d)(2) is not met. Regardless, for the reasons below, the Council should find that the Application satisfies this standard if the Council believes it applies. Finally, if the Council believes that any other clear and objective requirements are not met, it must identify any such area of noncompliance and provide the Applicant an opportunity to propose conditions under ORS 197.522(3).

The Applicant understands that the City Council seeks a plan for this Property that does not remove any significant trees to allow construction of a home. The Applicant and its team has spent a great deal of time to revise the plan to address the Council's concerns. The revised plan, attached to **Exhibit 1**, reflects the City Council's preference and does not propose to remove <u>any</u> significant trees solely for the purpose of creating a building envelope. The proposed revision reduces removal of significant trees from 17 under the original plan to only 6 under the revised plan. **Exhibit 1**.

However, this change results in the elimination of lots 58-65 and 40-44, reducing the total number of lots from 138 to 125. The lots proposed to be eliminated are in the vicinity of the existing Meyer Farm farmhouse. This increases the undeveloped Meyer Farm remainder parcel from 3.64 acres to 4.87 acres, as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

The remaining trees to be removed are located in three areas: three within the street section of 12th Street, two within the proposed alignment of Hilfiker Road, and one within the public utility easement ("PUE") fronting Lot 57. As the Applicant and staff explained during the hearing, it is not feasible to meaningfully relocate Hilfiker Lane as part of this proposal. It is also not possible to preserve a tree in a PUE, which provides power and telecommunications for each home. This is because the trenching required for installation of utilities is not possible through the root zone of a significant tree. PUEs are required pursuant to SRC 803.035(n). Removal of Lot 57 would not result in preservation of the single significant tree on that lot because the PUE is required to be placed there regardless of whether Lot 57 is developed.

No matter how the Meyer Farm property is ultimately developed, it will not be possible to preserve the significant trees within 12th Street, for two reasons. First, two of these trees are located within or on the boundary of the existing public right-of-way of 12th Street. Second, SRC 803.040 *requires* boundary streets to be dedicated and fully improved to City standards. For a local street such as 12th Street, this requires a 30-foot right-of-way dedication and a half-street paved improvement with curbs, sidewalks, and street lights. These improvements are not optional because none of the exceptions to this requirement listed in 803.040(d) pertain to this project.

The above circumstances related to boundary street improvements, required PUEs, and the TSP's requirement to extend Hilfiker Lane through the Property are all factors that demonstrate that there are "no reasonable design alternatives." For the above reasons, the Council should find that "there are no reasonable design alternatives that would enable preservation" of the six significant trees, and that the Application satisfies SRC 808.035(d)(2) if the Council finds that it applies.

#### IV. APPLICANT'S RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

Additional public argument was received prior to the close of the extended open record period on March 21. These were largely repetitive of arguments raised before, which arguments have already been addressed by the Applicant and City staff. The responses below concern what appear to be new arguments presented between March 14 and March 21. These responses and comments are in addition to those that Applicant previously addressed in its February 21, 2022 final written argument.

a. SRC 808.035(d)(2) is not clear and objective as required by ORS 197.307(4), and does not provide both clear and objective and discretionary approval pathways.

While the Applicant explains above why SRC 808.035(d)(2) can be met, it maintains that this standard is not applicable to the Application, both because it is not a subdivision approval criterion or embraced in the approval criteria, and because it is not "clear and objective" as required by ORS 197.307(4). It is not clear and objective because the term "reasonable design alternatives" is not defined in the SRC. Even if it were, application of such as standard necessarily requires discretion and it is not "clear and objective" on its face as required by ORS 227.173(2).

The Applicant also maintains its position that the allowance for tree removal where there "are no reasonable design alternatives that would enable preservation of the tree" in SRC 808.035(d)(2) cannot be considered an allowable "alternative approval process for applications and permits for residential development based on approval criteria [...] that are not clear and objective" in ORS 197.704(6). SRC 808.035(d)(2) is a unitary development standard, it is not "an alternative approval process," and does not necessarily authorize "a density at or above the density level authorized in the zone." And, as explained above, the City's requirement for right-of-way improvements in SRC 803.040 and coupled with the presence of significant trees within the required 12<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way make it impossible to avoid removing *any* significant trees. SRC 808.035(d)(2) should not be used as a basis for denial under ORS 197.307(4), both for the reasons stated in the Applicant's prior testimony, but also because use of such a discretionary tool necessarily results in discouragement of needed housing through unreasonable cost and delay. This is because without any codified guidance of what constitutes a "reasonable design alternative," it makes it virtually impossible for an applicant to lay out a subdivision plan on land containing significant trees with any certainty.

# b. SRC 205.010(d) does not "provide more than a broad injunction to comply with the Comprehensive Plan and UDC."

This is a limited land use decision under ORS 197.195 and no comprehensive plan provisions have been specifically incorporated into the approval criteria.

Additionally, the criteria set forth in SRC 205.010(d) do not provide a basis for denial for two reasons. First, the criteria are satisfied as explained in the Staff Report. Second, while the

Applicant and City staff have both demonstrated satisfaction of all applicable criteria, the Applicant preserves its argument that the land division approval criteria are not clear and objective, below.

#### i. SRC 205.010(d)(1)

SRC 205.010(d)(1) requires "[t]he tentative subdivision plan complies with the standards of this chapter and with *all applicable provisions of the UDC*, including but not limited to, the following: (A) *Lot standards*, including, but not limited to, standards for lot area, lot width and depth, lot frontage and designation of front and rear lot lines. (B) *City infrastructure standards*. (C) *Any special development standards*, including, but not limited to, floodplain development, special setbacks, geological or geotechnical analysis, and vision clearance." (Emphasis added).

This section is not clear and objective "lot standards," "city infrastructure standards," and "any special development standards" are not identified in the criterion, and particularly because there is no even a reference in the criterion to where these standards are located. Thus, the criterion requires significant statutory construction based on the context of UDC. To the extent that this criterion references Comprehensive Plan or TSP provisions, those must be specifically identified under ORS 197.195.

#### ii. SRC 205.010(d)(2)

SRC 205.010(d)(2) requires "[t]he tentative subdivision plan *does not impede the future use or development of the property or adjacent land.*" Emphasis added.

This section is not clear and objective. Land use regulations are not clear and objective if they impose "subjective, value-laden analyses that are designed to balance or mitigate impacts of the development on (1) the property to be developed or (2) the adjoining properties or community." *Rogue Valley Assoc. of Realtors v. City of Ashland*, 35 Or LUBA 139, 158 (1998), *aff'd*, 158 Or App 1, 970 P2d 685, *rev den*, 328 Or 594 (1999).

#### iii. SRC 205.010(d)(3)

SRC 205.010(d)(3) requires "[a]ny special development standards, including but not limited to, floodplain development, special setbacks, geological or geotechnical analysis, and vision clearance." Emphasis added.

This section is not clear and objective as these standards are not identified in the criterion and the phrase "any special development standards" requires discretion by the Council.

#### iv. SRC 205.010(d)(4)

SRC 205.010(d)(4) requires "[t]he street system in and adjacent to the tentative subdivision plan *conforms to the Salem Transportation System Plan.*" (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because these standards are not identified in the criterion. Plan elements that are applicable must be specifically identified under ORS 197.195. *Paterson v. City of Bend*, 49 Or LUBA 160, *aff'd*, *in part, rev'd and rem'd on other grounds*, 201 Or App 344, 118 P3d 842 (2005).

#### v. SRC 205.010(d)(5)

SRC 205.010(d)(5) requires "[t]he street system in and adjacent to the tentative subdivision plan is designed so as to provide for the safe, orderly, and efficient circulation of traffic into, through, and out of the subdivision." (Emphasis added).

This section is not clear and objective because the phrase "safe, orderly, and efficient" is not an objective benchmark and requires subjective interpretation. Clear and objective standards must have "objective benchmarks" for measuring the compliance of projects to which they apply. *Warren v. Washington County*, 78 Or LUBA 375, 388–89, *aff'd*, 296 Or App 595, 439 P3d 581 (2019).

#### vi. SRC 205.010(d)(6)

SRC 205.010(d)(6) requires "[t]he tentative subdivision plan provides *safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access* from within the subdivision to adjacent residential areas and transit stops, and to neighborhood activity centers within one-half mile of the development. For purposes of this criterion, neighborhood activity centers include, but are not limited to, existing or planned schools, parks, shopping areas, transit stops, or employment centers." (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because it is not clear and objective. "Safe and convenient" is not an objective benchmark and requires subjective interpretation. *Warren*, 78 Or LUBA at 388–89.

#### vii. SRC 205.010(d)(7)

SRC 205.010(d)(7) requires "[t]he tentative subdivision plan *mitigates impacts to the transportation system consistent with the approved traffic impact analysis*, where applicable." (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because the phrase "mitigates impacts to the transportation system consistent with the approved traffic impact analysis" is not clear and objective. Specifically, the above criterion does not provide objective benchmarks for the phrase "mitigates impacts" and the word "consistent."

### viii. SRC 205.010(d)(8)

SRC 205.010(d)(8) requires that "[t]he tentative subdivision plan *takes into account the topography and vegetation* of the site so *the need for variances is minimized* to the *greatest extent practicable*." (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because it is not clear and objective. Specifically, the phrases "takes into account," the word "minimized," and the phrase "greatest extent practicable" are not clear and objective because they lack the "objective benchmarks for measurement" required by *Warren v. Washington County*.

#### ix. SRC 205.010(d)(9)

SRC 205.010(d)(9) requires "[t]he tentative subdivision plan *takes into account the topography* and vegetation of the site, such that the *least disruption of the site*, topography, and vegetation will result from the reasonable development of the lots." (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because it is not clear and objective. Specifically, the phrase "takes into account," the phrase "least disruption," and the phrase "reasonable development of the lots" are not clear and objective because they lack the "objective benchmarks for measurement" required by Warren v. Washington County.

#### x. SRC 205.010(d)(10)

SRC 205.010(d)(10) requires "[w]hen the tentative subdivision plan requires an Urban Growth Preliminary Declaration under SRC chapter 200, the tentative subdivision plan is *designed in a manner that ensures that the conditions requiring the construction of on-site infrastructure in the Urban Growth Preliminary Declaration will occur*, and, if off-site improvements are required in the Urban Growth Preliminary Declaration, construction of any off-site improvements is assured." (Emphasis added).

This section does not provide a basis for denial because it is not clear and objective. The words "ensure" and "assured" are not clear and objective.

c. The proposed condition of approval that would allow the Applicant to preserve all but six significant trees has not "already been denied" by the Council.

At least one opponent argued that the Applicant's proposed revision that preserves all but six significant trees has already been denied by the Council. This is not correct because the proposed condition of approval was not offered until March 9, more than a week after the Council's tentative denial vote. The Applicant is entitled to recommend a condition of approval to address trees under ORS 197.522(3) and the Applicant appreciates that the Council has decided to consider its revised proposal.

## d. A "speed and usage" survey on Sylvan Avenue is not required by the approval criteria.

The concerns about improvement Sylvan do not relate to an approval criterion because that street does not abut the subject property. However, the Applicant provided a complete transportation impact analysis that identified trip generation on affected intersections and roadways, and City engineering staff have concurred with that analysis. The Assistant City Engineer has not found that the project will increase cut-through traffic on any nearby streets. In fact, the Assistant City Engineer has opined that "when this extension of Hilfiker Lane is completed, there will likely be a reduction of the "cut through" traffic on Suntree Drive SE, Mandy Avenue SE and Albert Drive SE."

There is no evidence of equal weight in the record which demonstrates that the proposed transportation improvements will not provide adequate safety and levels of service in the area. Regardless, the Council can find that there is no reason to believe that the project will adversely affect Sylvan Avenue because most traffic bound for Battle Creek Road will utilize the new Hilfiker extension.

e. Historical documents concerning past development attempts, including the Henry A Meyer Revocable Trust 2019 pre-application conference, are not relevant to the Criteria.

Record of prior development attempts and any pre-application conference unconnected with the Application are not in the record and not relevant to the approval criteria.

#### V. CONCLUSION

At bottom, the revised plan is a good-faith attempt by the Applicant to receive feedback from the community and City Council, and make changes to its development plan to accommodate that feedback. For the above reasons, and pursuant to ORS 197.522(3), the Applicant requests that the City Council impose the following condition of approval:

"The Final Plat shall not include proposed lots 58-65 and 40-44 as development lots."

The Applicant appreciates the Council's consideration of the above request. Given that there is no dispute that all other criteria are met, the Council should approve the Application with the above condition.

Best regards,

Garrett H. Stephenson

GST/jmhi Enclosure

cc: Mr. Aaron Panko (w/enclosure) (via email)

Ms. Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie (w/enclosure) (via email)

Mr. Dan Atchison (w/enclosure) (via email) Mr. Martin Kehoe (w/enclosure) (via email) Ms. Jennifer Arnold (w/enclosure) (via email)

Ms. Bailey M. Oswald (w/enclosure) (via email

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March 9, 2022

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#### VIA EMAIL

Salem City Council 555 Liberty Street SE, Room 220 Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Letter on behalf of Applicant regarding the Meyer Farm Subdivision (City Case No. SUB21-09)

Dear Mayor Bennett and Councilors:

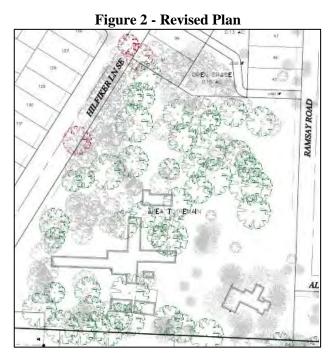
This office represents Kehoe Northwest Properties, LLC (the "Applicant") in its subdivision application (the "Application") for the Meyer Farm Property (City Casefile SUB21-09). On February 28, 2022, the City Council tentatively voted to deny the Application due to its removal of 17 significant trees. Prior to the City Council's deliberations, the Applicant had received consistent staff support for its Tree Conservation Plan (to which SRC 808.035(d)(2)) applies), which is a Type 1 application that is not part of the Type II subdivision Application. The City Council's deliberation was the Applicant's first notice that it had not, in the City's view, satisfied SRC 808.035(d)(2). ORS 197.522(3) provides the Applicant a right to offer a condition of approval to satisfy the applicable development standards. Pursuant to that statute, the Applicant hereby requests that the City Council accept as a condition of approval the attached revised lot layout that preservers all but 6 of the 64 identified significant trees, resulting in a significant tree preservation rate of 94%. **Exhibit 1.** 

The Applicant has heard the concerns of the neighborhood and now the City Council. At all relevant times, when confronted with concerns about tree removal the Applicant has been willing to provide more information, including updating its tree inventory twice— first in response to concerns raised by the Morningside Neighborhood Association and then at the request of the Council. At this point, both the Applicant's arborist and the City Forester agree on the identity and location of all significant trees on the Property, which updated inventory was presented to the City Council in a staff memorandum dated February 3.

The Applicant understands that the City Council seeks a plan for this Property that does not remove any significant trees to allow construction of a home. The Applicant and its team has spent a great deal of time to revise the plan to address the Council's concerns. The attached revised plan reflects the City Council's preference and does not propose to remove <u>any</u> significant trees solely for the purpose of creating a building envelope. The proposed revision reduces removal of significant trees from 17 under the original plan (**Exhibit 2**) to only 6 under the revised plan (**Exhibit 1**).

However, this change results in the elimination of lots 58-65 and 40-44, reducing the total number of lots from 138 to 125. The lots proposed to be eliminated are in the vicinity of the existing Meyer Farm farmhouse. This increases the undeveloped Meyer Farm remainder parcel from 3.64 acres to 4.87 acres, as shown below.

Figure 1 - Original Plan



The remaining trees to be removed are located in three areas: three within the street section of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, two within the proposed alignment of Hilfiker Road, and one within the public utility easement ("PUE") fronting Lot 57. As the Applicant and staff explained during the hearing, it is not feasible to meaningfully relocate Hilfiker Lane as part of this proposal. It is also not possible to preserve a tree in a PUE, which provides power and telecommunications for each home. This is because the trenching required for installation of utilities is not possible through the root zone of a significant tree. PUEs are required pursuant to SRC 803.035(n). Removal of Lot 57 would not result in preservation of the single significant tree on that lot because the PUE is required to be placed there regardless of whether Lot 57 is developed.

No matter how the Meyer Farm property is ultimately developed, it will not be possible to preserve the significant trees within 12<sup>th</sup> Street, for two reasons. First, two of these trees are located within or on the boundary of the existing public right-of-way of 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Second, SRC 803.040 *requires* boundary streets to be dedicated and fully improved to City standards. For a local street such as 12<sup>th</sup> Street, this means a 30-foot right-of-way dedication and a half-street paved improvement with curbs, sidewalks, and street lights. These improvements are not optional because none of the exceptions to this requirement listed in 803.040(d) pertain to

Exhibit 1, Page 2 of 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Note that the attached revised plan does not renumber the remaining lots, which can be done on the final plat.

this project. This fact particularly underscores the extent to which SRC 808.035(d)(2) is not clear and objective.<sup>2</sup>

At bottom, the revised plan is a good-faith attempt by the Applicant to receive feedback from the community and City Council, and make changes to its development plan to accommodate that feedback. For the above reasons, and pursuant to ORS 197.522(3), the Applicant requests that the City Council impose the following condition of approval:

"The Final Plat shall not include proposed lots 58-65 and 40-44 as development lots."

The Applicant appreciates the Council's consideration of the above request. Given that there is no dispute that all other criteria are met, the Council should approve the Application with the above condition.

Best regards,

Garrett H. Stephenson

GST:jmhi Enclosures

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Ms. Jennifer Arnold (via email) (w/enclosures)

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Mr. Martin Kehoe (via email) (w/enclosures)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Applicant maintains its position that the allowance for tree removal where there "are no reasonable design alternatives that would enable preservation of the tree" in SRC 808.035(d)(2) cannot be considered an allowable "alternative approval process for applications and permits for residential development based on approval criteria [...] that are not clear and objective" in ORS 197.704(6). SRC 808.035(d)(2) is a unitary development standard, it is not "an alternative approval process," and does not necessarily authorize "a density at or above the density level authorized in the zone." SRC 808.035(d)(2) should not be used as a basis for denial under ORS 197.307(4), both for the reasons stated in the Applicant's prior testimony, but also because use of such a discretionary tool necessarily results in discouragement of needed housing through unreasonable cost and delay. This is because without any codified guidance of what constitutes a "reasonable design alternative," it makes it virtually impossible for an applicant to lay out a subdivision plan on land containing significant trees with any certainty.

