

June 20, 2014

Redmond Planning Commission
C/O Kimberly Dietz, Senior Planner
15670 NE 85th Street
Redmond, WA 98052

RE: SE Redmond Neighborhood Plan Update

Greetings Lady and Gentlemen of the Planning Commission,
Kimberly Dietz and all members of the City Planning Department:

We are writing to you today to let you know how the proposed zoning change in the MDD1 sub-zone of the SE Redmond Neighborhood Plan may affect us, our families and our tenants. Our family owns two commercial buildings in the area slated to transition away from manufacturing park to multifamily zoning. Our buildings were built in accordance with City regulations and approval, specifically for commercial use. We are not developers and builders. We derive our livelihood from our commercial leases. Our buildings have an estimated remaining economic life of approximately 40 years.

We are opposed to the change in zoning that is under consideration. When we first heard about the proposed plan we were told the change would occur probably 20 years in the future. But upon reading the technical report we see that there is a target date of January 1, 2018. At that time our manufacturing park uses would be considered nonconforming. Currently the nonconforming use section of the RZC states "The City recognizes that land, structures, and uses of land and structures which do not conform to the Redmond Zoning Code can become nuisances, can disrupt the orderly development of the City, and can create unsafe, hazardous, and unhealthful conditions. The City also recognizes that the eventual elimination of existing legal nonconforming uses and structures assists in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and benefits the health, safety, and welfare of the community." Clearly the intent is to eliminate Nonconforming uses.

Section 7 addresses how elimination of legal nonconforming uses will be accomplished. Subsection (a) states that all rights to the legal nonconforming use are lost if the use is changed or the use is "abandoned" for 12 months or more.

The rules in effect when we purchased the commercial buildings allowed many uses within the manufacturing park zoning. So, what would trigger our loss of the proposed nonconforming rights under the new plan, a change within the allowed uses under manufacturing park or a change in use that is not allowed in manufacturing park zoning? In leasing commercial industrial buildings the typical term of a lease is 3-5 years. So it is very likely that different tenants will have different uses and very unlikely that we would find a tenant with exactly the same usage as the previous tenant. We would be seeking any tenant whose business is allowed within all of the manufacturing zone categories. If we would lose our legal nonconforming status based on having to have exactly the same kind of use as the previous tenant the City would, in essence, be taking away our livelihood and land values.

Currently the commercial real estate market in Redmond is recovering from an economic slow down. Leasing now is robust. But, as you undoubtedly know, the real estate market is cyclical. A building next to ours just recently rented. It had been vacant for 36 months despite the owner's active attempts to find a tenant. The building was maintained, improved, listed and advertised. It was not an eyesore, nuisance, hazard, unsafe nor in an unhealthful condition. Yet, under the proposed plan that owner would have lost

legal nonconforming status. The building's zoning would convert to residential, regardless of the fact that it was legally built as a commercial structure and unsuitable for multifamily residential usage. 12 months is too short a time in which to consider a commercial building's use "abandoned" for zoning purposes. If the proposed zoning change is approved please change the requirement to 36 months before the legal nonconforming right is eliminated.

Both of our buildings are part of a manufacturing park plan. Our parking is jointly owned. If one of our buildings lost its right to the nonconforming use and we were forced to convert to multifamily residential, how would we do that? Parking requirements must be different for multifamily than for manufacturing park. Would the value our building be worthless because we couldn't meet city requirements in order to build a multifamily structure? Would it even make sense to place a residential structure in the midst of a manufacturing park?

Our current tenants have homes in Redmond. They tell us they love being able to work close to where they live. However, if we are forced to comply with onerous city requirements we could lose our ability to compete for good tenants in the future. Good paying jobs will be lost. People who own homes seem to care more about the communities in which they live. If the multifamily housing envisioned in MDD1 is mostly apartment buildings, the City may be trading good paying jobs for a less involved, more transient population.

For these reasons we are urging you not to change the zoning in MDD1. Please do not take away our property rights and our income.

Sincerely,
Jim and Barbara Hill
Buildings at 17617 NE 65th Street and 17945 NE 65th Street