

SPECIAL TAX FOR SIDEWALKS ?

Current City Code (3.4.200 Transportation Improvement Standards) requires that "all public and private streets must have sidewalks and curbs" and where these do not exist, any improvement (of a certain percentage) to a property within 600 feet of an existing sidewalk must include sidewalks and curbs. It is understandable that any homeowner would consider it irrational to spend thousands of dollars to develop "sidewalks to nowhere" (STN) in front of their house, but how then do we develop the "complete walkable community" that State Administrative Rules and Bend Development Department officials talk about.

Shel Silverstein had it right, "sidewalks to nowhere" can be a problematic if not scary condition for children wanting to exercise some independence by walking to school, or even more so for the disabled for whom a safe, solid and level surface substantially defines their world.

But the City decided to make an exception to Code for Woodriver Village. It was previously a septic served large lot (1/4 acre +) mobile home park that was rezoned as RS (4-7.3 units per acre) and sewer added. Now builders there don't want to be required to build STN and claim it's narrow streets with large trees and no sidewalks or curbs made it "unique". This uniqueness designation was required by Code (BDC 4.6.200) to allow the City to create an alternative and avoid being considered as arbitrary and preferential to those building Mac-Mansions in Woodriver Village. Despite a NA's Land Use Chair pointing out in public hearings that there are 50+ old subdivisions in Bend with similar street and sidewalk conditions, Payment in Lieu of Sidewalk Construction (BDC 3.4.160) is the standard there but not in similar old subdivisions. Rather than complete "gentrification", similar older subdivisions in east Bend will more likely be redeveloped through "infill" and "development alternatives", which are harmless sounding parts of the City's dense and "affordable" housing plan but are definitely HOT TOPICS that should be posted on every Neighborhood Association's web page.

This hastily written and ill considered Code change needs a substantial rewrite so that it integrates with the Transportation System Plan and both become part of a **real** redevelopment plan and cure for STN that financially encourages rather than discourages redevelopment of individual lots while addressing affordability, accessibility, and the existing character of a subdivision. Existing Code requires sidewalks on all public and private streets (HOAs included) existing gives the City the authority to impose a special improvement district for sidewalks without your approval. Revision of these Code provisions wit a reasonable interpretation of the underlined words and phrases in these excerpts from OAR 660 -

"pedestrian routes are reasonably free from hazards, particularly types and levels of automobile traffic which would interfere with or discourage pedestrian or cycle travel for short trips".

The intent of this requirement is to provide ... extensions and connections along existing and future streets which are needed to provide reasonably direct routes for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

"sidewalks shall be required along arterial, collector, and most local streets in urban areas"

- could be the basis for a round table discussion with City, Neighborhood Association, and HOA representatives. Take the initiative and plan sidewalks on your street, in your subdivision, within your Neighborhood Association boundaries, and connecting to parks and shopping. Don't let the City start the discussion with their plan, a special improvement district, and fee structure already in hand.

ESTABLISH A SIDEWALK COMMITTEE

