

WE CAN comment to Council, April 24, 2017

Hello. My name is Eliza Kashinsky, I live in Ward 1, and I'm a member of WE CAN.

I know Council has been struggling to ensure that they don't hear the same comment over and over, so I'm going to ask now that everyone who is here and supports Housing Choice in Eugene to please stand up.

Eugene is facing a critical housing shortage. Prices are rising for both renters and home-buyers. Many of us are finding that the terms of our leases are changing quickly, leaving us scrambling to find someplace to live. Those of us who are able to buy, and would like a smaller home in walkable areas are find that those types of homes are in particularly short supply.

Those of us who have the resources and desire to create homes for our neighbors are finding that our attempt to create compatible infill are being made some complex by codes, regulations, fees and process that it is next to impossible—and even more impossible to do in a way that would be affordable to the majority of Eugeniens.

The purpose of the project that have come out of Envision Eugene was to determine how to balance our community's need for housing choice and affordability, our desire to enhance and create neighborhoods, our need to do our part to address climate change, our desire to promote compact urban development and transportation choice.

The pillars work together—compact, walkable neighborhoods support transit and help reduce our reliance on single-occupancy automobiles, which makes it more like that we'll be able to shift our transportation mode share enough to meet our climate recovery goals. Providing increased access to existing walkable neighborhoods in the form of compatible housing can both provide economic opportunities and housing affordability. Addressing housing affordability for all income levels also makes subsidized housing easier to create.

However, since the Pillars were created, the project that have attempted to implement them have failed or stalled when they reached this Council, primarily to appease those for whom the idea of protecting existing neighborhoods from change trumps all other concerns. This city has removed the ability of over 4000 home owners to create secondary dwelling units, and turned discussions about how to achieve our goals into power struggles over process.

On Wednesday, at Council it was said that there had been a promise made to the neighborhood association boards near South Willamette. But this Council and this City has made a lot of promises. Almost every neighborhood has been promised a refinement plan. You made a commitment to value equity in this City, to ensure that no neighborhood is forgotten. But a piece-meal approach to addressing the interconnected issues of housing choice, transportation options and walkability, economic opportunity, and climate change and energy resiliency of our city means that our children and our children's children will still be waiting for it to be "their turn."

Thank you, and Jenn Smith will continue this comment.

Thank you, my name is Jennifer Smith, I live in Ward 3, and I'm a member of WE CAN.

As a city, we've made a commitment to take serious steps to reduce our impact on climate. We've promised to implement actions to stop transportation deaths in this city, to protect our natural resources, and to examine the question of urban reserves. And we've promised each other that we would work to provide housing that is affordable to all income levels.

Our city has finite resources—we don't have an endless pool of time and money. River Road has a limited-time opportunity to use grant funds to supplement our city planning resources. Let's take advantage of that – and pass the motion that Councilor Evans introduced.

Back in October, when you passed the South Willamette Initiative Motion, Councilor Brown promised a quick process that you could vote on and start in January. This promise hasn't materialized. Though the South Willamette process has stalled and its outcome seems murky, our citywide goals have not changed: we still need to honor the character of our neighborhoods, AND we need action to address the housing crisis that we are having now.

I want to reaffirm that corridor planning makes the most sense if we want to make improvements to how our city functions in time for our children to benefit. Disjointed, piecemeal area planning isn't getting us closer to our goals.

Everyone in this room comes at this concern from a different perspective. We live all over Eugene. Some of us are renters who struggle to keep up with rising rents. Some of us are trying to buy our first home, or to downsize to one that meets our changing needs. Some of us are currently without any shelter at all. Some of us are landlords, property owners, architects or builders who wish to help provide housing for others. Some of us care most about being able to live in a walkable neighborhood, or having the choice to bike or take transit to get around. We want to protect and repair our environment, to provide economic security for ourselves and others, and to make sure that everyone in our city –including our most vulnerable citizens– are able to have a roof over their heads.

We are all asking you, as our elected representatives, to help us create the Eugene we Envisioned. You won't make all of us happy all the time. There are going to be hard decisions, and hard choices. Please make them.

We support solutions to our housing crisis. We support housing choice, and we are standing up for that value.

Thank you.