



Southeast Neighborhood Plan Medford, Oregon

Project Type

Mixed-Use Neighborhood Plan

Description

Residential Units: Approximately 4000 dwellings at full build-out

Density: Approximately 4.2 – 8.2 dwelling units per acre

Site

1,000 Acres

Southeast (S-E) Overlay Zone

Location

Southeast Medford

East of North Phoenix Road, North of Coal Mine Road, and South of Hillcrest Road

Zoning

SFR-2 Estate Lots, SFR 4 and SFR-6 Standard Lot, SFR-10 Small Lot, MFR-15 Row house, MFR-20 and MFR-30 High density Residential, C-C Community Commercial, C-S/P Service Commercial and Professional Office

Developer

Mike Mahar
Mahar Homes Inc.
Medford, OR

Planner

Mark Gallagher
City of Medford

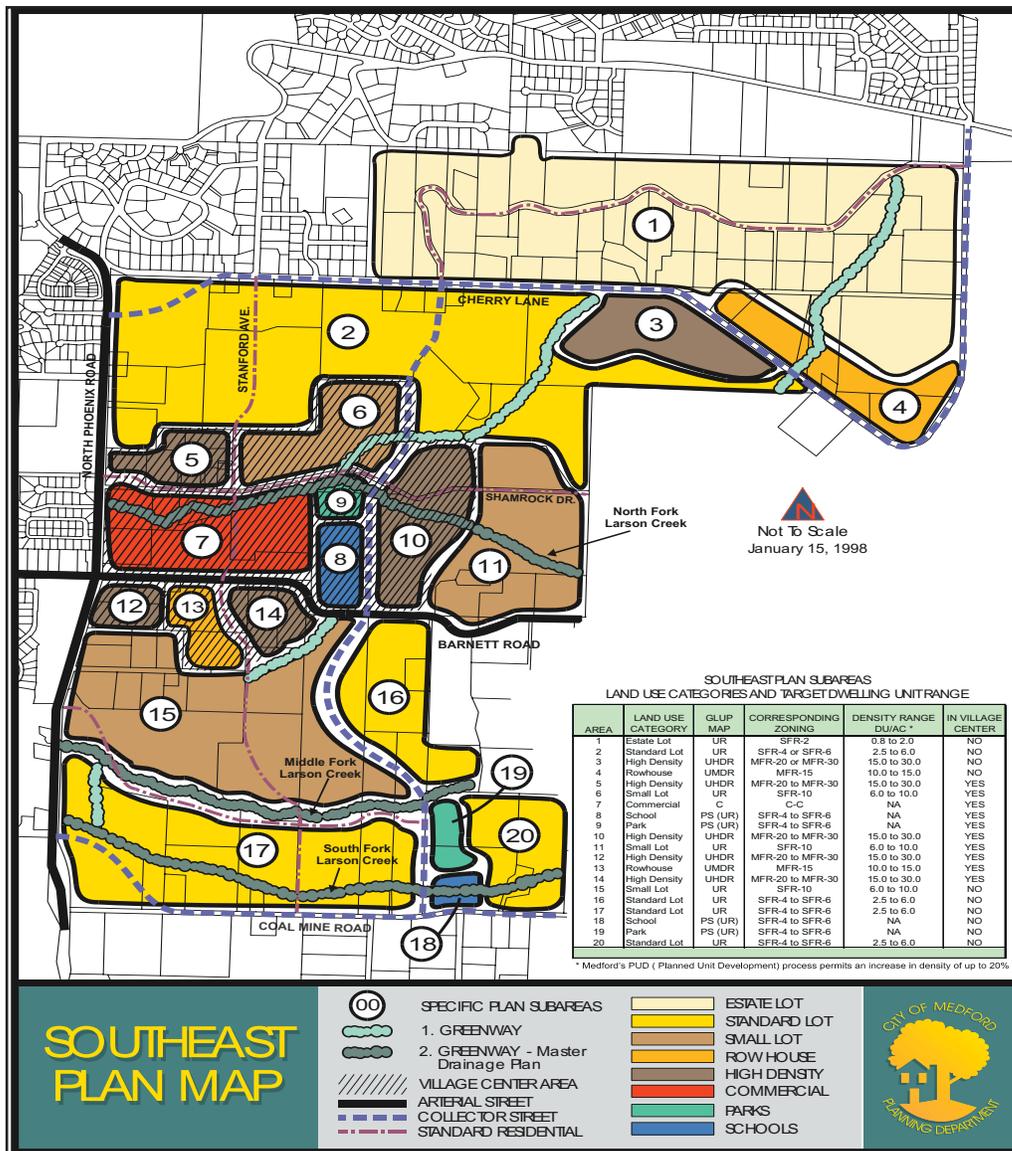


The Medford Southeast Plan

The City of Medford, regional center to southern Oregon and northern California, is an attractive and growing place to live. Money Magazine named it one of the “best places to retire” in 2002. With desirability come the challenges of managing rapid growth. From 1990-2000 Medford grew by 3.4%, and continues to grow. To accommodate this growth, when it expanded the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), Medford created the Southeast Neighborhood Plan. Years

of research and meetings helped the City create a unique plan that accommodates population growth while adding value to the community. Medford replanned less-productive agricultural and open-space land at the urban fringe to create a neighborhood that mixes uses, expands residential choices, and promotes alternative modes of transportation. The result is the Southeast Neighborhood Plan.

While still in its early states, plans are set to make this area a thriving mixed-use Transit Oriented District (TOD). The area is designed as a hub of commerce and activity that will complement the shopping attractions and services already in downtown Medford. Ample greenways and parks are planned for the Southeast Neighborhood to preserve the agricultural and abundant natural beauty of the area.



Building a Smart Development Vision

Planning for the neighborhood began more than fifteen years ago. After numerous studies and research, the City of Medford determined that additional land was required within the UGB to satisfy long-term urbanization needs. But where was the City going to expand the UGB? Important orchard lands surround the City, and the community felt it was important to retain this vital resource land. To aid its decision about the best place of expansion, the City turned to the expertise of the USDA Soil and Conservation District to evaluate land capability. It ultimately found a 1,000 acre tract with only moderately productive soils. Using this and

other information, the Medford City Council and Jackson County Board of Commissioners brought the land into the urban growth boundary in 1990.

The next phase of planning was a very involved and lengthy process. The City spent five years researching and designing different land-use plans for the area in order to create a neighborhood that would be an asset to Medford long into the future. Traffic issues, however, put the process on hold from 1995-1998 after a study determined that traffic congestion at the South Medford I-5 Interchange was unacceptable and could not accommodate additional

development. The development slow down would stay in place until the City and state took corrective action at the interchange. A South Medford Citizen Interchange Advisory Committee (CAC) was created to help work on the Southeast Plan and alleviate the transportation congestion issues. The CAC was instrumental in helping pass the “Alternative Highway Mobility Standards” that include funding and designing a new interchange by 2020, and “actions designed to improve traffic flow, increase safety and reduce reliance on the automobile.” Once a plan was implemented addressing congestion, the city moved forward with the Southeast Plan.

Features

At the heart of the Southeast Neighborhood Plan is the proposed Village Center that is a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use, higher density central core for the Southeast Area. The Village Center enables residents to live within a five-minute walk of services for their daily needs. It features a Main Street lined with commercial stores. Offices, and a variety of housing will surround the commercial core. Three parks and a school will provide opportunities for recreation and education.

Pedestrian amenities such as public and private plazas, pocket parks, transit waiting areas, and extra-wide sidewalks are planned for the Village Center. These amenities will increase pedestrian activity and provide pleasant places for community interaction. In addition, an interconnected street grid pattern will help alleviate traffic from the major collector streets. Planner Mark Gallagher says, “It

was our goal to use pedestrian-friendly elements for the “Main Street” portion of the Village Center to promote retail and commercial uses and to create an environment that encourages walking.”

A “greenway” designation was created for stream corridors and waterways in the SE Area. The greenways will protect native habitat, supply natural storm drainage and furnish locations for pedestrian and bike paths. The greenways are an important piece of the plan and the City wants to preserve the natural beauty of the area that makes Medford an attractive place to live.

Ample on-street parking is planned for the Village Center. No minimum off-street parking requirements are written for the commercial core of the Village Center. This is meant to encourage compact development and alternative modes of transportation.

Village Center Densities

- * High density housing
15-36 DU/acre
- * Row housing
10-15 DU/acre
- * Single-family residential lots
6-10 DU/acre

“Having the South Medford Interchange Citizen Advisory Committee meet every two weeks was difficult, but it really made communication work between the development community and the city.”

*Mark Gallagher
City of Medford*

Innovations in Transportation

The City of Medford is working to implement a twenty-year Transportation System Plan (TSP), a document that guides transportation improvements to enhance mobility throughout the City. Medford's TSP builds upon work completed in the Rogue Valley regional TSP, calling for development of transit supportive land uses (Transit Oriented Districts, or TODs) as a main strategy for balancing development patterns and providing greater transportation choices. TODs typically focus development in a high activity commercial core area with good transit service, mixed commercial and residential land uses around the core, and a

well-integrated system of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The SE Medford Area is one of a half dozen designated TODs in the Rogue Valley.

The Southeast Neighborhood exhibits many important elements of TOD design. The Neighborhood contains a village center and is designed primarily for pedestrians and features ample sidewalks, safe and convenient connections to destinations, and amenities that attract pedestrian activity. The plan will allow on-street parking on the major arterial street that forms the spine of the shopping district – something not typically found in conventional

developments. Strict regulation of automobile oriented uses, such as drive-up windows, will enhance pedestrian-friendly design. Residential alleys locate car traffic behind houses, leaving the sidewalks clear of automobiles entering and exiting driveways, and making the walking environment more pleasing. Skinny streets (28 ft maximum), sidewalks and bike-paths will offer connections between the parks, greenway, Village Center, and surrounding residential homes. Nearly everything about the design of the neighborhood will accommodate expansion of transit service into the area.



Implementation Tools: The Southeast Overlay District

The City established overlay zones to implement the Southeast Plan. The overlay zones specify permitted land-use and residential densities. Development design and approval by the City is primarily through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance. Implementing the Southeast Overlay District will ensure that target densities and mixed-use development occur.

Smart Development Principles

Medford worked hard to create a plan consistent with smart development principles.

Through the incorporation of features like shared driveways, alleys and internal pedestrian connections, the Southeast Plan **uses land and resources efficiently**.

The Village Center component of the project will create a new commercial core located in an area with **existing full urban services**. A specific goal of the Southeast plan is to prepare for orderly and efficient

extension of public facilities.

The project **encourages transportation choices** through the integration of pedestrian friendly streets, connectivity to surrounding land-uses, and compact urban form, allowing neighbors to walk and bike to their destinations. One of the City of Medford's main goals is to provide transportation options that reduce reliance on automobiles.

A **mixed-use** Village Center with commercial, institutional, and resi-

dential uses is a prominent feature of the Southeast Plan. High density and row housing will help fulfill the City of Medford's goal of increasing housing options for residents.

The Southeast Plan also creates a unique, livable and welcoming atmosphere through the incorporation of **detailed, human-scale design**. The planning process paid great attention to details of urban form and created a system where the City will provide flexibility in its development regulations as the area develops.

Years in the Making: Developing the Plan

The Medford Southeast Plan was an ambitious undertaking that took years to complete. However the City was not alone in this process. It used the resources of state agencies and contracted planning professionals to help the City develop its vision, plan the physical features, and create an implementation program. As with nearly any successful effort, active citizen participation was a key part of the plan. A citizens' advisory committee held bi-weekly meetings for two years during the project.

The City made use of many studies to inform development of the Southeast Neighborhood Plan – land use alternatives, real estate market analysis, traffic impact studies, and options for new development regulations all contributed to development of the TOD plan. The resulting development plan and land use regulations allow for a greater mix of uses (especially vertical mixing uses such as ground floor retail, second story office, and third floor dwelling units) than is normally found in conventional developments.

“The project had a silver lining. I knew that the quality and amount of planning that went into this development would pay off in the end.”

*Mike Mahar
Mahar Homes, Inc.*



Construction: The Vision Comes to Life!

In 1990, in the earliest stages of what would become the Southeast Plan, Planning Director Jim Eisenhard approached developer Mike Mahar about building single-family residential homes in a portion of the neighborhood. Mahar heads a well-known and reputable Rogue Valley development company and was a likely choice to set the stage for a new vision in Medford. Motivated by the opportunity and a desire to positively affect his community, Mahar took on the project. He conducted informal calculations to make sure the project made sound financial

sense, and then purchased approximately 200 acres of land over a three year period for approximately \$30,000 an acre.

When the south Medford interchange congestion issue came to light in 1995, Mahar was forced to put development plans on hold. Frustrated, but still believing his work would be completed, he said, "The project had a silver lining. I knew that the quality and amount of planning that went into this development would pay off in the end." Mahar kept his crews busy with

other projects until the interchange congestion issue was resolved in 2000.

Mahar was able to overcome the difficulties of the traffic congestion issues through perseverance and thirty years of experience in the industry. He also has a respectable credit line that allows him to be self-financed. Mahar said, "Building a name for yourself takes time, you have to earn it. Financing is the one thing that has actually gotten easier over time."



Future Activity: Where do we go from here?

With the plan in place the stage is set for build-out of the Southeast Neighborhood. Principal Planner Mark Gallagher says, “It is hard to estimate when the plan will be carried out because the timing of the development will be driven by market conditions.” He adds, “Developers can phase individual projects as they wish. The area will build out as demand dictates.”

Creation of the Commercial Core Master Plan likely will be the last community planning effort in the Southeast Area. The City plans to complete a Commercial Core Master Plan in the next couple of years. The three main property owners in the commercial core area will play a big role in this effort, as will residents of the neighborhood and the rest of the community. City officials expect

that the Master Plan will set parameters for the developer, as opposed to specific design solutions contained in the Southeast Plan. Gallagher notes, “We don’t think there will be interest in building the retail commercial portion until there are more houses. Each individual project will go through Planning Commission review, most as Planned Unit Developments that carry out the identified land use for that area.”

“The plan is intended to create an area that is much less reliant on automobile travel, and that preserves the natural environment, incorporating it into a desirable, livable community.”

*Gloria Gardiner
Department of Land Conservation
and Development*



“The shared driveways reduce the amount of permeable surface and adds to the neighborhood feel of the development.”

*Mike Mahar
Mahar Homes, Inc.*

Lessons Learned

For more information...

Oregon Transportation Growth Management (TGM) Program:

635 Capitol Street, N.E.
Suite 150
Salem, OR 97301
Tel- (503) 373-0050
www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/index.shtml

Congress for the New Urbanism:

www.cnu.org

Urban Land Institute:

www.uli.org

Smart Growth America:

www.smartgrowthamerica.com

Center for Excellence in Sustainable Development:

www.sustainable.doe.gov

National Neighborhood Coalition:

www.neighborhoodcoalition.org

Local Government

Commission:

www.lgc.org

Joint Center for Sustainable Communities:

www.usmayors.org/uscm/sustainable

Smart Growth Network:

www.smartgrowthonline.org

Community

The Southeast Neighborhood is a work in progress. The community has been involved since the beginning, and it is essential that they continue to stay involved through the course of development. The citizens' advisory committee, which includes stakeholders, business partners, city staff and design specialists, have worked together to create a unique vision for the Southeast Plan. Planner Mark Gallagher said, "Having the committee meet every two weeks was difficult, but it really made communication easier between the development community, neighbors and City Hall."

Collaboration

Collaboration goes hand in hand with community. The members of the committee all had differing backgrounds and ideas. They would discuss opinions about the Southeast Plan until they reached a unanimous decision. This process had its share of disagreements and arguments, however, the result is a quality plan that will be an asset to the community. Planning Director Eisenhard observed, "We knew that this was going to be a long and involved process. The willingness of all parties to sit down and hash out our differences really makes this a great vision for our community."

Commitment

The Southeast Plan suffered many setbacks, the main one being the I-5 interchange congestion issue, which essentially delayed construction for five years. Instead of giving up on the plan, the City formed a committee that analyzed potential transportation and land-use issues. They worked hard to find ways to cut down traffic on the South Interchange and promote alternative forms of transportation. The Southeast Plan would never have come to fruition without the steadfast commitment of the City.

Quality Developers

It is important to find developers who are committed to smart development principles. The City of Medford wishes to incorporate smart development principles into the Southeast Plan, and it will be important to find developers who share in the vision for the site. Principal Planner Mark Gallagher concludes, "We are working hard to put the emphasis on pedestrians. Developers need to understand this and work with us on our overall vision for the area."



Community
Planning
Workshop

Developed by CPW, University of Oregon, June 2005, www.uoregon.edu/~csco/
All photos courtesy of: The Community Service Center, University of Oregon