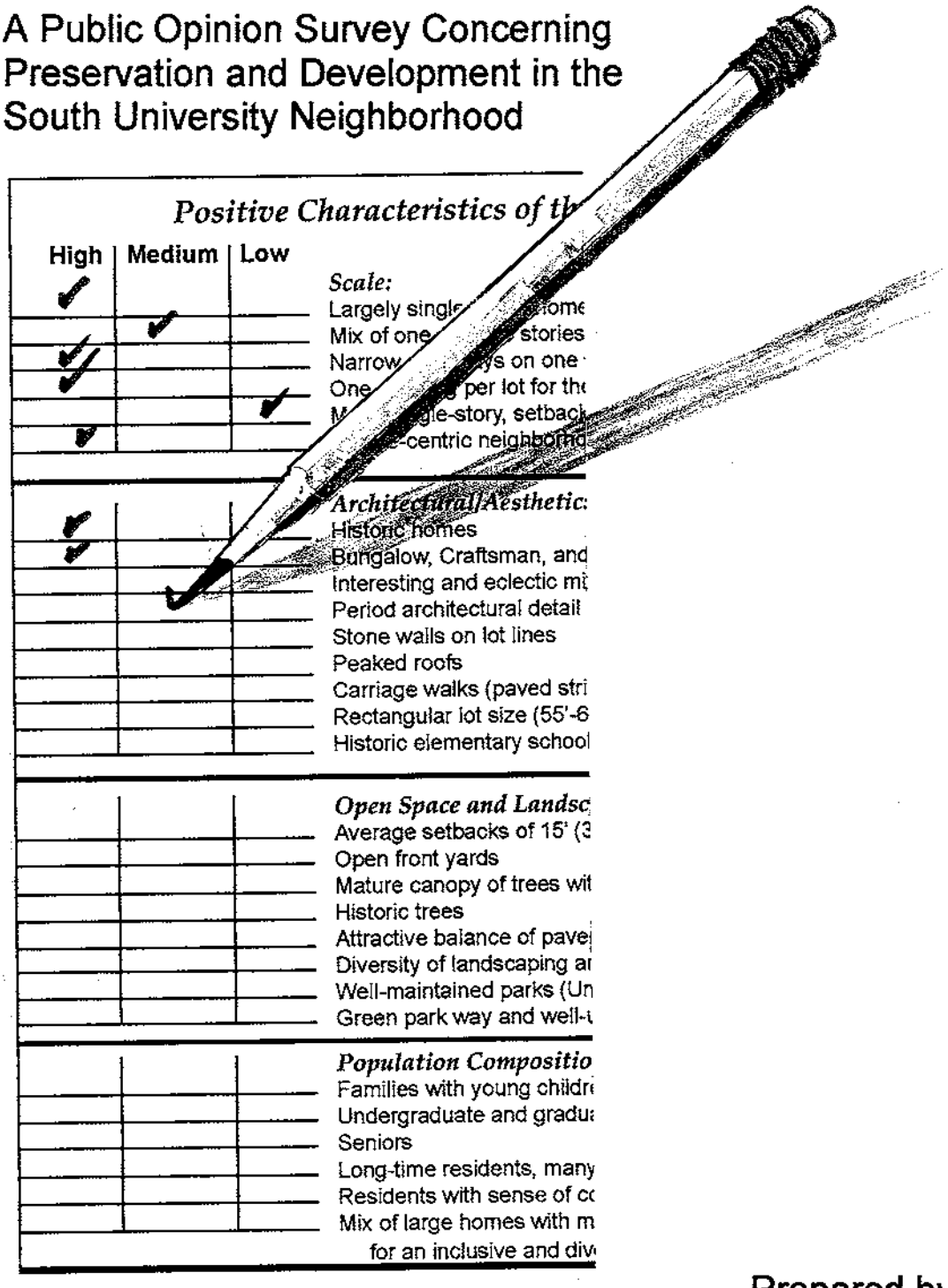
What You Told Us

A Public Opinion Survey Concerning Preservation and Development in the South University Neighborhood



Prepared by the
South University
Neighborhood
Planning Group

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HERE'S WHAT YOU TOLD US:

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Preservation and Development in the
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Introduction

Citizen participation is a central principle of land use policy in Oregon. The South Eugene Neighborhood Planning Group (NPG) has put that principle into practice[1] as it continues to provide information to Eugene's Infill Compatibility Standards project (ICS).

The goal of the ICS project is to cope with future growth by allowing higher density infill and redevelopment only if the land use code contains standards aimed at protecting the character of existing neighborhoods such as South University. A critical first step in crafting code standards is to determine what it is that the residents value about the existing neighborhood and what it is that they perceive that could threaten the neighborhood should additional development occur. This survey is aimed at that task.

Methodology

The information contained in the survey was initially crafted by several other Eugene neighborhood associations about two years ago working through the Neighborhood Leaders Council, a group composed of leaders of the various neighborhood associations. As noted above, the central inquiry was to determine those characteristics that define the neighborhoods and the potential threats posed by higher density infill and redevelopment.

The initial list was then reviewed by an ICS subcommittee and grouped into several subcategories. Specifically, positive neighborhood characteristics were grouped under "Scale," "Architectural/Aesthetic," "Open Space and Landscaping," "Population Composition," "Streets, Alleys and Transportation," and "Amenities." Likewise, potential negative infill impacts were grouped under "Mass and Scale Issues," "Architectural/Aesthetic Issues," "Open Space and Landscaping Issues," and "Relationship to Neighbors."

Inadvertently, the subsection dealing with potential negative parking and traffic impacts was left off of the survey. Surprisingly, none of the respondents commented on that omission. That section included the following under the heading "Streets, Alleys and Transportation:"

Excessive pavement for parking,
Excessive poorly located or poorly screened parking,
Excessive alley traffic due to alley-access parking for multi-family infill,
Excessive curb cuts, Parking or excessive driveway surface in front of dwelling,
Lack of sufficient on-site parking for new development,
Lack of secure covered bike parking for apartments,
Inadequate street infrastructure for increased density,
Increased traffic resulting in upgrading of street classification,
Disjointed public street network, and
Odd private street configuration.

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[1] The NPG is comprised of several members of the South University Neighborhood Association (SUNA) Board of Directors including Marilyn Milne, Carolyn Jacobs, Joyce Couper, Marsha Shankman and Mike Westervelt. Non-board members include Bill Aspegren, Al Couper and Lauren Hulse. Mr.Aspegren, Ms.Jacobs and Mr. Couper also serve on various ICS committees.

The NPG will immediately set about to survey the neighborhood regarding these transportation issues. Details are yet to be worked out but will include both paper and electronic survey media.

In the meantime, it should be noted that adding the missing items would not change the numerical score of individual items that have already been surveyed. This is true because the rankings are not competitive. Specifically, each item could be ranked "high," "medium," or "low" without any effect on any other item. In terms of the overall ranking from top to bottom, however, the individual ranking of some items could change as a result of the additional surveying to be done.

Those groups were then reviewed by several South University residents and modified slightly by the SUNA Board of Directors to reflect more closely the unique characteristics of the South University neighborhood.[2] The results are those items listed in the public opinion survey that is the subject of this report. See the survey at Exhibit 2.

The primary lack in the lists to this point has been a sense of priority or ranking among the various listed neighborhood characteristics and potential infill threats. It was quickly decided by the NPG that those results should come from the citizenry at large of the neighborhood in as many numbers as would be feasible to survey or otherwise involve.

The buildup to that effort began with a series of articles in the neighborhood newsletter, the SUNA Times, beginning in the spring of 2007. Those pieces described planning efforts in other neighborhoods, the ICS project and, most recently, this survey itself.

Those efforts were followed by discussions by the SUNA Board of Directors, by postings in the SUNA public information kiosks located in University Park and at Edison School and by e-mail through the SUNA list server.

The outreach efforts hit full stride in early October when more than 600 survey forms were hand-delivered to residences throughout the neighborhood. Respondents were given until October 10th to complete the survey and drop it off at any of four drop sites. Later the deadline was extended to October 17th.

Residents and property owners were also given the option of completing the survey electronically by using a form posted on Survey Monkey at http://tinyurl.com/6zl5a5.

The survey form was linked to an announcement of the next SUNA Membership meeting, which was rescheduled to October 14th due to a conflict with the national presidential debate on October 7th. The survey and meeting announcement were considered by many to be the prime driver of attendance at the meeting. About 50 SUNA members attended and participated in a panel discussion concerning several related land use issues.[3]

The Results

In all, 72 South University residents or property owners responded, 42 with paper copies and 26 electronically. Considering the world financial situation, the presidential election and the proliferation of junk mail, the NPG feels the results are gratifying and significant.

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[2] The South University neighborhood is bounded on the north and south by 18th Ave. and 24th Ave. and on the east and west by Agate St. and Patterson St. It is designated for high density residential use from 18th Ave. to the mid-block between 19th Ave. and 20th Ave. and for low density residential from that point south to 24th Ave. See zoning map at Exhibit 1.

[3] Included were the City's Minor Code Amendment Project (MiCAP), the ICS project and the companion Opportunity Siting (OS) project, as well as the neighborhood survey and NPG reports on density and building height regulations.

Respondents were asked to mark each item as "High," "Medium," or "Low." Three respondents to the paper form expressed some confusion about what the word "Priority" meant in relation to "Potential Negative Impacts of Infill." Their responses, however, followed much the same pattern as those who expressed no confusion and were included in the totals. Respondents using Survey Monkey were told to rate potential negative impacts as High, Medium, or Low "Impact" rather than "Priority."

The answers were then tabulated and scored with High, Medium and Low receiving 3, 2, and 1 point each respectively.

There are numerous ways to display the results. For example, they could simply be listed from highest score to lowest score. That method is displayed in the tables 1 and 2. Another method would be to rank each of the items from high score to low score within each of the subcategories. And still another method would be to list, in rank order, all of the items with a "High" score, all of the items with a "Medium" score and all of the items with a "Low" score. Those methods are beyond the scope of this report. The data have been saved, however, and are available for anyone wishing to use any of those methods.

For those who like to "cut to the chase," the following were the top ten scoring items in their respective categories: (The full results are shown on Tables 1 and 2.)

Top Ten Positive Neighborhood Characteristics

Score	*Characteristic*
212	Residents with sense of commitment to the neighborhood
212	Well maintained parks (University Park and adjacent Washburne Park)
211	Connection by foot, bicycle, and bus to other parts of the community
209	Walking distance to elementary, middle and high school and the U of O
208	Green parkway and well used sidewalks
208	Mature canopy of trees with protected critical root zone
206	Slow-moving traffic (except on streets free of stop signs)
206	Easy connection to the University of Oregon and downtown
203	Attractive balance of pavement with green space
203	Nearby thriving commercial zones (northeast and southwest) and cultural attractions, many of which are locally owned

Top Ten Potential Negative Impacts of Infill

Score	*Characteristic*
206	Low quality or inappropriate construction materials
206	Removal of existing mature & historic trees (on-site and in right-of-way)
201	Excessive building height
198	Buildings out of scale to adjacent dwellings
197	Parking or excessive driveway surface in front of structures
195	Removal of historic or heritage structures
195	Loss of privacy (views of adjacent out-of-scale buildings & views into back yards)
192	Excessive impervious surface
187	Excessive wall adjacent to existing dwelling
179	Excessively plain wall facing street or adjacent to existing buildings

Respondent Comments

Several respondents wrote comments on the survey forms all of which were considered by the NPG. A few of the more significant ones are as follows:

Several respondents noted a difference in the desirability of having graduate versus undergraduate students as neighbors. This was related to behavior problems among undergraduates.
A few people wondered what a "snout-nosed" house is.
One person said that problems of building height and mass were related to new, and not existing structures.
"The section on "Population Composition" smacks of exclusivity."
"Excessive building height and mass issues are related to location: OK north of 19th; bad elsewhere."
"Would the historic district have provided protection had it been approved?"
"Some mature trees need to be removed (diseased, hazardous, etc.)."

What Went Right, What Went Wrong

Generally, respondents had little trouble with the survey and the return rate was pretty good. Note: No attempt has been made to represent this as a sophisticated, statistically accurate survey.

On the negative side, the omission of one entire category of potential negative impacts is, as noted above, a defect that will be corrected.

A second problem was the choice of terminology. It was somewhat misleading to use the term "priority" regarding potential negative impacts. It would have been clearer to refer to "High, Medium, or Low Levels of Concern."

Another language problem was the use of jargon. Terms such as "snout-nosed house," "carriage walk," "parkway," "people-centric," "human scale," and "interior setbacks" were confusing to several respondents.

What Happens Next

The Neighborhood Planning Group places a high priority on continual report back to, and discussion with, the neighborhood at large. As noted above, another neighborhood meeting or workshop is contemplated for December 2008 or January 2009. Between now and then, the NPG will closely evaluate the survey results to determine which ones might lend themselves to land use policy or code changes. Those concepts will be the subject of discussion at the next neighborhood meeting.

Also under consideration will be the need for additional fact-gathering. Such things as "potential for new lots or parcels," "potential for secondary dwellings," "potential for alley-access parcels," and "existing code violations," are among the topics under discussion.

As noted above, the immediate goal is to present recommendations to the ICS, the Planning Commission and the City Council. This must all take place during 2008/2009.

Longer range, the neighborhood will be asked to consider whether a more comprehensive look at land use should be taken. This might take the form of a Refinement Plan, a form-based development code provision, special area zoning designation or similar effort. At this point it is sufficient to note that land use planning is a "process," not a "product" when viewed through the long-range lens.

TABLE 1
POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUTH UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD IN RANK ORDER

Score	*Characteristic*
212	Well-maintained parks (University Park & adjacent Washburne Park)
212	Residents with sense of commitment to neighborhood
211	Connection by foot, bicycle and bus to other parts of the community
209	Walking distance to elementary school, middle school, high school, and the University of Oregon
208	Mature canopy of trees with protected critical root zone
208	Green park way and well-used sidewalks
206	People-centric neighborhood design with structures on a human scale
206	Slow-moving traffic (Except on streets free of stop signs.)
206	Easy connection to University of Oregon and downtown
203	Historic homes
203	Attractive balance of pavement and green space
203	Nearby thriving commercial zones (northeast and southwest) and cultural attractions, many of which are locally owned
201	Well used bike lane on Alder
200	Historic elementary school
197	Mix of large homes with more modest ones allows for an inclusive and diverse population
194	Diversity of landscaping and gardens
191	Bungalow, Craftsman, and 20th-century Revival homes
190	Largely single family homes except for northern boundary
190	Families with young children
188	Long-time residents, many with a University of Oregon connection
187	One dwelling per lot for the most part
186	Interesting and eclectic mix of architectural styles
184	Historic trees
182	Well developed bus routes and safe bus stops
181	Average setbacks of 15' (30' on University)
179	Period architectural detail
179	Seniors
179	Variety of functional and accessible public facilities and services, including four churches
176	Open front yards
174	Mix of one and two stories facing street
168	Blocks bisected by alleys
166	Grid layout of streets and alleys
165	Narrow, paved streets (generally 66 ft. wide; 90 ft. wide on University)
156	Peaked roofs
147	Narrow driveways on one side of lot
146	Many single-story, setback garages
143	Rectangular lot size (55'-60' by 100' or 160')
137	Undergraduate and graduate students
117	Carriage walks (paved strip between curb and sidewalk)
115	Stone walls on lot lines

Based on a public opinion survey conducted by the South University Neighborhood Planning Group October 2008

TABLE 2
POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF INFILL IN THE SOUTH UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD IN RANK ORDER

Score	*Potential Impact*
206	Low quality or inappropriate construction materials
206	Removal of existing mature & historic trees (on site and in right of way)
201	Excessive building height
198	Buildings out of scale to adjacent dwellings
197	Parking or excessive driveway surface in front of structures
195	Removal of historic or heritage structures
195	Loss of privacy (views of adjacent out of scale buildings/ views into adjacent backyards)
192	Excessive impervious surfaces
187	Excessive wall adjacent to existing dwelling
179	Excessively plain wall facing street or adjacent to existing buildings
178	Loss/lack of "eyes on the street": buildings not oriented toward street
177	Incompatible setback to street
176	Inadequate or inappropriate landscaping/vegetation
174	Excessive scale or mass in relation to lot size
169	Buildings situated inappropriately on the lot
168	Solar access obstruction
164	Excessive noise from building-related equipment
158	Lot aggregations allowing for even larger buildings (R-3 & R-4 zones)
157	Insufficient interior setbacks
149	Incompatible architectural styles
145	Loss of lot size standards
123	Snout-nosed houses

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