Planning Commission Report

To: City Council

From: Planning Commission

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Date: December 15, 2010

File Number: L100348

Title: Bear Creek Neighborhood Plan Update

Planning Commission Recommendation: Approval as recommended by Planning Commission

Recommended Action: Adopt an ordinance amending the Neighborhoods Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Approve a resolution expressing the City Council's intent to adopt amendments to development regulations concurrent with or immediately following adoption of the Redmond Zoning Code (the result of the code rewrite project).

Summary: Key policy ideas in the updated neighborhood plan include:

- Recognize the urban-rural dual nature of the neighborhood's character;
- Promote awareness of the Bear/Evans Creek Corridor and the connected underground aquifer as an important natural resource;
- Focus urban development outside the floodplain and consider alternatives to retirement residences on the upland portion of the Keller Farm, such as multi-family development or small-scale commercial;
- Ensure that Avondale Road can be safely used by residents, including pedestrians, and commuters; and,
- Emphasize attractive, affordable, and safe residential areas in the neighborhood in part by allowing for a diversity of home types and sizes, including cottages and attached homes, and extending inclusionary (affordability) requirements to this neighborhood.

Background: The Bear Creek Neighborhood Plan was last updated in the 1990s. At the time, Redmond planned for an area many times the size of what is now called the "Bear Creek Neighborhood". For that reason, the existing neighborhood plan does not provide adequate focus on the area for which Redmond currently plans. In addition, conditions have changed since the mid-1990s. New housing developments have opened in and around the neighborhood, and Redmond has opened Perrigo Park.

More recently, residents have asked that the Bear Creek neighborhood Plan be updated as developers and property owners have considered major development proposals. For example, Aegis Living proposed a 150-plus-unit retirement community near the corner of Avondale Road and 180th Avenue NE. At that time, residents expressed a need to review land use and transportation plans for the neighborhood as a whole. This proposal is the result of that process.

The Bear Creek Citizen Advisory Committee was appointed in September 2009 and worked for one year to develop a complete proposal to update the Bear Creek Neighborhood Plan. The CAC worked diligently to involve neighborhood stakeholders; the CAC's efforts are described in the Technical Committee Report.

Reasons the Proposal should be Adopted:

The Planning Commission recommends adoption of the proposed amendment because:

1) It addresses Comprehensive Plan policies directing the City to periodically update neighborhood plans, and the update for this plan is overdue;
2) It addresses issues of long-term concern and importance in the neighborhood;
3) The CAC has listened to the neighborhood through focus groups, open houses, regular work meetings, in-the-neighborhood meetings, written communication, and informal communication in order to understand neighborhood priorities that continue to have value; and
4) It is consistent with the overall goals and vision for Redmond as expressed in the Goals, Vision, and Framework Policies Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Recommended Findings of Fact

1. Public Hearing and Notice

a. Public Hearing Date

The City of Redmond Planning Commission held a public hearing for this proposal beginning on November 10, 2010 and ending on December 1, 2010.

b. Notice

The public hearing notice was published in the Seattle Times. Public notices were posted in City Hall and the Redmond Library. Notice was also given by including the hearing in Planning Commission agendas and extended agendas mailed to various members of the public and various agencies. Additionally, hearing notification was posted on the city's web site and cable TV.

2. Public Comments

Two people provided written testimony. Mr. Steve Thompson, a member of the CAC, provided written testimony (see Exhibit D). His written testimony addressed the issues of 1) future congestion on Avondale Road, 2) U-turns, and 3) speeding on Avondale Road.

Ms. Sue Stewart provided testimony regarding the use of bus pull-outs in urban settings. She provided information about when they might be useful and what the physical requirements would be (see Exhibit D). She spoke as a citizen and not as a representative of any organization. Ms. Stewart also provided oral testimony in the same vein as her written testimony.

Recommended Conclusions

1. Key Issues Discussed by the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission conducted a general discussion of the plan update with the Bear Creek Citizen Advisory Committee. During that discussion, each CAC member described why he/she decided to participate in the plan update, and what was most important to him/her. Transportation stood-out as an important issue to both CAC members and Planning Commissioners. CAC members and Commissioners also discussed potential land uses on remaining developable land in the Avondale corridor. One particular transportation issue is highlighted below.

- **Use of Bus Pull-outs on Avondale Road**

The Technical Committee's recommendation included a policy that included bus pull-outs as having some potential to reduce impediments to traffic flow in the Avondale corridor. Commissioners questioned whether it was a good idea to name that type of solution specifically given that Metro Transit is known to prefer not to use bus pull-outs when it is difficult to pull back into traffic. The Commission recommends emphasizing objectives rather than solutions. The revised policy speaks to improving safety for pedestrians (especially students walking to or waiting for a bus), and reducing impediments to traffic flow while not facilitating speeding.

Other discussion issues are summarized in the Final Issues Matrix (Exhibit C)

2. Recommended Conclusions of the Technical Committee.

The recommended conclusions in the Technical Committee Report (Exhibit E) should be adopted as conclusions.

3. Planning Commission Recommendation.

The Planning Commission voted to recommend the amendment at its December 1, 2010 meeting. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A:	Planning Commission Recommended Amendments to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan
Exhibit B:	Planning Commission Recommended Amendments to the Redmond Zoning Code (aka Redmond Community Development Guide)
Exhibit C:	Planning Commission Final Issues Matrix
Exhibit D:	Written Public Testimony
Exhibit E:	Technical Committee Report with Exhibits

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Robert G. Odle, Director of Planning and Community Development Date

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Thomas T. Hinman, Planning Commission Chair Date

Approved for Council Agenda _____ _____

John Marchione, Mayor Date

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