



Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce

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November 1, 2024

Dear Mayor & City Council Members,

I am writing, on behalf of the Stayton Sublimity Board of Directors and our local Chamber Member businesses, to urge you to uphold the Planning Commission's decision to deny the recent request for a zoning change at the intersection of Cascade Highway & Whitney St. This decision aligns with the long-term vision for fostering a diverse and vibrant business landscape that supports community needs and attracts targeted investments to our city. Changing the zoning at this key location could severely disrupt both our economic development goals and the unique opportunities we are striving to cultivate and capitalize on for that area.

The Planning Commission's decision recognizes the critical role that zoning consistency plays in maintaining an inviting, cohesive commercial area. This intersection, in particular, has been strategically designated to encourage specific types of businesses that will contribute to the area's economic vitality and welcoming aesthetic. Introducing incompatible zoning near this intersection threatens to alter the balance of businesses we have carefully cultivated and may lead to a proliferation of uses that are not in keeping with our vision.

Here are several potential impacts to consider if the zoning change is approved:

- 1. Shift in Business Mix:** By opening this location to uses that fall outside our current zoning, we risk drawing in businesses that do not align with our broader economic goals or serve the needs of residents and existing businesses. This change could deter other businesses we aim to attract—those that align with our vision and provide diverse, complementary services to support local economic resilience.
- 2. Impact on Local Business Vitality:** Existing businesses, particularly smaller locally-owned ones, may experience a reduction in foot traffic if less compatible businesses are introduced to the area. The Planning Commission's decision is geared toward nurturing an effective, interconnected commercial environment. A zoning change could disrupt this, negatively impacting sales and the overall customer experience.
- 3. Traffic and Safety Concerns:** Modifying zoning at a busy intersection also has implications for traffic flow and pedestrian safety. As the area currently operates, traffic patterns are tailored to support the kinds of businesses that thrive in that environment. Altering the zoning to permit other uses could result in increased vehicle traffic, congestion, and compromised safety for residents, pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4. Undermining Strategic Planning Goals:** The Planning Commission's decision reflects our city's master plan and community development goals. Approving the zoning change would undermine these efforts by allowing an unanticipated shift in land use that erodes our strategic vision and could complicate future planning efforts for adjacent properties.

We realize that many are opposed simply because of the specific business that is seeking the zoning change. That argument is not without merit, as they already operate several locations near us including Marion, Jefferson, Aumsville, and Mill City, and recent news articles highlight some instability of the franchise due to quick growth and market saturation. Furthermore, Stayton already has several established businesses that serve a similar customer demographic, and while we recognize the value of providing affordable services within our community, this particular intersection has been reserved for businesses that can elevate the overall economic profile of the area and attract a broader range of customers. Introducing a business with a narrower, low-income target market at this high-traffic intersection could limit the area's appeal to potential investors and higher-income customers, potentially undermining our community's long-term economic growth objectives.

All those concerns aside, I believe the issue at hand, regardless of what business was vying for a zoning change, is that maintaining the current zoning is essential to preserving the distinctive, well-planned commercial landscape that attracts investment, enhances quality of life, and aligns with the needs of our residents, businesses, and potential visitors. Please consider these factors carefully as you weigh in on this decision. Upholding it will not only protect the existing business ecosystem but will also ensure that future development aligns with our shared vision for a thriving, well-planned city.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carmelle Bielenberg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carmelle Bielenberg, President & CEO
Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce
& Regional Visitor Center