

RESOLUTION NO. R-1617-69

ITEM NO. 8b

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**STAFF REPORT**

**ITEM:** The City of Norman and Aria Development, L.L.C. request amendment of the NORMAN 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan from Low Density Residential Designation to Commercial Designation for Block 14 of SOUTHRIDGE ADDITION, located south of Enid Street between Classen Boulevard and Oklahoma Avenue.

**BACKGROUND:** In 1922 the City of Norman was deeded two tracts of land that were platted as part of the Southridge Addition: Blocks Eight (8) and Fourteen (14). These blocks were deeded to the City with the understanding they would be used as open space/park like areas for public use. The area of Block 8 is heavily treed – making it an appropriate park like sitting area for the residents of the Southridge Addition. However, over the years increased traffic along Classen Boulevard has made Block 14 an unsafe/undesirable area for a park or for pedestrian use.

**SUMMARY OF REQUEST:** The adjacent property owner, Aria Development, L.L.C., and the current owner of the subject tract, City of Norman, are working together to close and vacate the portion of Oklahoma Avenue situated between this subject tract and the adjacent 3 acre tract to the east. Along with the closure the City is working on an agreement to sell this subject tract to Aria for incorporation into their future development plans.

Aria Development already owns the adjacent 3 acre tract. Aria approached the City with the overall development plan to close and vacate a portion of Oklahoma Avenue, purchase the subject tract and incorporate that area into their overall development plan; as stated, Aria already owns the 3 acres to the east of Oklahoma Avenue. The proposal is to develop a retail strip center with a standalone restaurant on the south end of the property.

City staff, representing the City as owner, is moving forward with the closure of Oklahoma Avenue under separate application, see associated staff report.

**STAFF ANALYSIS:** The NORMAN 2025 Plan identifies two criteria that must be examined before a land use change is approved.

1. ***There has been a change in circumstances resulting from development of the properties in the general vicinity which suggest that the proposed change will not be contrary to the public interest.***

This specific area has experienced little physical change from development in recent years. Over the years the land has transitioned from a drive-in restaurant, gas station and small commercial businesses to used car lots and an impound yard. In contrast, the general vicinity has seen redevelopment, population and traffic increases, warranting the redevelopment and street closure.

At the time the property was deeded to the City in 1922, there were two tracts of land included; this subject tract and a similar tract to the north, located at Ponca and Classen. In 1989 the residents of Southridge Neighborhood petitioned the City to close the portion of Ponca between Okmulgee Street and Shawnee Street and adjacent to Block 8, the other island deeded to the City. This closure eliminated an access point traffic used as a cut-through located in a residential neighborhood. The portion of Ponca closed was incorporated into the deeded tract, creating a park like area for the residents.

The deed from 1922 does express that the land deeded would be for the use of the public as a park. In the event the tract or parcel of land is ever used for any purpose other than a park the title shall revert to the grantors. Providing, further, that the grantors reserved to themselves the right to supervise, control and improve the real estate and premises conveyed during the life time of the grantors. This subject tract is a small triangle of land and currently classified as a beautification island, with a few Cedars and Amur Maples planted where Enid Street meets Classen Boulevard. Mowing of the tract is currently provided by the City through a contracted service. The City does not classify the area as a park due to its small size and busy location. It is basically a traffic island. The applicant agrees the majority of the area of this subject tract will remain open and will replant trees out of the sight triangle for those using Enid Street. There will be no buildings constructed in this area. The redevelopment of the adjacent property and incorporation of this subject tract into the development will not be contrary to the public interest.

**2. *There is a determination that the proposed change would not result in adverse land use or adverse traffic impacts to surrounding properties or the vicinity.***

Across Classen Boulevard the extension of Oklahoma Avenue was closed, creating a cul-de-sac and eliminating the connection to Lindsey Street. To the north of this proposal Ponca Avenue was also closed creating a park like area for the adjacent residents. South and east there have been two large student housing developments consisting of 800 to 1000 beds per development, generating increased traffic in the area. Allowing the property to be included in the adjacent development will not have adverse traffic impacts to surrounding properties or the vicinity; in fact, closing the access will eliminate what staff views as a hazardous intersection.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff supports this request and recommends approval of Resolution No. R-1617-69.