

TO: St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency
FROM: John Walsh, City Administrator
DATE: May 3, 2017
SUBJECT: St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan

PURPOSE

The St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency (Agency) is being asked to review the proposed St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan (Plan) and to decide whether to recommend the Plan be forwarded through the public review process of urban renewal plans, including presentation to the St. Helens Planning Commission for their review of conformance with the St. Helens Comprehensive Plan, to the Columbia County Commission for their review, and to the St. Helens City Council for consideration of a non-emergency ordinance to adopt the Plan. The Plan is designed for the St. Helens Urban Renewal Area (Area), an area of 756 acres that includes prime waterfront and business district properties. The reason for urban renewal is to provide a financing mechanism to fund improvements to allow for the development of this Area, including transportation and utility improvements, site preparation, open space improvements, and economic development programs.

BACKGROUND

The City has undergone several planning efforts to understand the challenges it faces related to transportation connectivity, redevelopment, and industrial readiness. These include the U.S. 30 and Columbia/St. Helens Corridor Master Plan (adopted 2015) and the Waterfront Redevelopment Framework Plan (adopted 2016). These plans identify a vision for St. Helens that includes enhanced roadway connections from U.S. 30 to the Riverfront District that help to attract visitors and residents to a burgeoning waterfront district with public access to the river and new investment in mixed-use development.

The Plan is designed for the Urban Renewal Area. It:

- Allows for improvements to key roads (and commercial corridors) that lead to downtown: Old Portland Road and St. Helens Street/Columbia Boulevard.
- Aids in revitalization of the Riverfront District and the Houlton Business District.
- Attracts jobs to vacant and underutilized industrial land through infrastructure investments.
- Supports development on the Veneer Property, the principal subject of the 2016 Framework Plan.

Urban renewal is a program used throughout Oregon to provide a financing mechanism to implement City plans in specific areas. Urban renewal is not a new tax on property. The revenue to pay for projects in an urban renewal area is generated by the growth in assessed property value that occurs through new development and annual growth in assessed property values within the urban renewal area.

Urban renewal is put into effect by the local government adopting an urban renewal plan (the city, in this case). The urban renewal plan defines the urban renewal area, states goals and

objectives for the area, lists projects and programs that can be undertaken, provides a dollar limit on the funds borrowed for urban renewal projects, and states how the plan may be changed in the future.

The Area consists of approximately 756 acres of land including 584 parcels that total 605.46 acres, and 150.54 acres of rights of way. It is anticipated that the Plan will take 25 years of tax increment collections to implement, projecting to terminate in FYE 2043, although a specific duration date is not a component of the Plan. The maximum amount of indebtedness (amount of TIF for projects and programs) that may be issued for the Plan is \$62,000,000 (sixty two million dollars.) The maximum indebtedness does not include interest paid on any borrowing by the urban renewal agency. There is a proposed financing plan in the Report that shows that the Plan is financially feasible. It is understood that the Agency may make changes to the financing plan as needs and opportunities arise, which is typically during the annual budgeting process.

The Plan goals guide tax increment investment in the Area over the life of the Plan. The project category descriptions and list of projects will aid future decision makers when considering how best to expend tax increment funds. The Plan will be administered by the St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency, which was established in 2008 and is composed of City Council members. Substantial amendments to the Plan must be approved by City Council as outlined in Section 4 of the Plan. The specific projects proposed in this Plan are outlined in Section 2 of the Plan and include the major categories of infrastructure, open space/wayfinding, economic development, site preparation and project administration.

PROCESS

The process for approval includes the following steps, in accordance with ORS 457.

1. Preparation of a plan, including opportunity for citizen involvement. The St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan details the public involvement in Section 1.5. It includes two Open Houses, three Advisory Committee Meetings, and a City Council briefing. It also includes the future formal presentations to the Planning Commission, Columbia County, and City Council.
2. St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency review of the proposed Plan and accompanying Report on May 3, 2017.
3. Review and recommendation by the St. Helens Planning Commission on June 13, 2017.
4. Presentation of the Plan to the Columbia County Commission for a briefing in June 2017.
5. Notice to all citizens of St. Helens of a hearing before the City Council. Notice will be provided by mailing all City utility customers in their June bills.
6. Forwarding a copy of the proposed Plan and the Report to the governing body of each taxing district. The formal taxing districts letters will be sent out on May 4, 2017.

7. Hearing by City Council and adoption of the proposed Plan and accompanying Report by a non-emergency ordinance. The hearing by City Council will be held on July 19, 2017 and the vote on the ordinance will be on the same date. The ordinance must be a non-emergency ordinance, which means that the ordinance does not take effect until 30 days after its approval and during that period may be referred to St. Helens voters if a sufficient number of signatures are obtained on a referral petition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency pass the following motion.

Draft motion: The St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency forwards the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan to the St. Helens Planning Commission for their review of the Plan's conformance to the St. Helens Comprehensive Plan, to the Columbia County Commission for briefing, and then to the St. Helens City Council for their review and vote on adoption. In addition, the Agency designates John Walsh serve as the liaison to represent the Agency at the Columbia County Commission briefing.

Attachments:

1. St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan
2. Report Accompanying the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan