

July 15, 2016

TO: ASTORIA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

FROM: BRETT ESTES, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: ASTOR WEST URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT – PLAN AMENDMENT STUDY

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The Astor West Urban Renewal Area (URA) was established by the Astoria Development Commission (ADC) in 2002 as an important catalyst for the Port of Astoria industrial area and Uniontown commercial district. Since then, a number of projects have been completed, including the renovation of the Red Building, Maritime Memorial Park, Bornstein Seafoods, Englund Marine, and the new Bergeson Construction headquarters. As a result, there is an opportunity to reconsider the future of the Astor West URA and how it can be a more effective tool for community revitalization, economic development, and redevelopment. With this in mind, the City Council established FY 15-16 goals to “develop a master plan for the western entrance to Astoria” and “promote positive economic development through strengthening partnerships.”

An overall concept goal that recognizes existing Council direction and aligns multiple policy goals is to establish a five year action plan for investing Astor West URA funds. There are three objectives that could be achieved to accomplish this goal: 1) Develop a framework for revitalizing the West Marine Corridor from the Young’s Bay entrance to Uniontown (Columbia Avenue), 2) Develop a citywide economic development strategy that also incorporates the Port of Astoria’s industrial holdings, and 3) Conduct an expansion study to consider amending the URA boundary from Columbia Avenue to include the Bond Street slide area.

The following is a brief discussion of each objective for context.

- 1) West Marine Drive Corridor: The Oregon Transportation & Growth Management (TGM) Program has supported numerous City of Astoria efforts over the years. Based on this track record, staff has been in contact with TGM staff regarding the 2016 program year to develop a revitalization strategy for the West Marine Drive corridor. This plan would address streetscape improvements, gateway treatment designs at the Young’s Bay roundabout and Astoria Megler Bridge entryway, evaluate development code standards to encourage more private investment, and review access management, traffic safety, and other mobility issues that were identified in the 2013 Transportation System Plan (TSP). Full applications are due in June 2016. Staff expects to bring a grant application for authorization to the June 6 Council meeting.

- 2) The Five Year Economic Development Strategy is a DLCD grant funded project that is included in the Council packet. For more information, please refer to the separate memo.
- 3) As a result of a landslide in 2007, Bond Street has been closed to two way traffic. Only one westbound lane of traffic is allowed limiting east west traffic to Marine Drive. In addition, water and sewer lines have been rerouted above the street. The Public Works Department commissioned a geotechnical analysis completed in August 2015 to study the feasibility of adding a retaining wall. The results of the study concluded that is indeed feasible. Based on the results, the Public Works Department prepared an “order of magnitude” cost estimate of \$395,000 to construct a retaining wall, repair Bond Street for two way traffic, and include low cost traffic calming measures to mitigate potential speeding along a narrow street in a dense neighborhood of residential buildings. In addition to the street aspect, there are underinvested residential properties that potentially need assistance (i.e., grants/ loans/technical assistance) to renovate and preserve as affordable housing, which is another FY 15-16 Council Goal. Staff has met with the Community Action Team about a targeted pilot program that would offer some form of assistance to qualified property owners to renovate multi-family buildings while still meeting Development Code design requirements.

In order to accomplish this last objective, the URA boundary would need to be expanded in what is referred to as a “plan amendment.” A conceptual expansion with the minimum amount of land - from Columbia Avenue to the city owned slide area - would add roughly 4 acres. This amount would be well under the maximum amount allowed by ORS 457.220, but targeted to achieve the reopening of Bond Street and potentially revitalize residential properties. Refined costs for each project would need to be developed as part of the plan amendment process and require ADC approval.

## **PROCESS**

Each of the objectives has different timelines, consultants, and planning requirements which makes it challenging from a project management perspective. The most immediate need is to authorize the plan amendment study. This study requires mapping and analyzing the proposed boundary, public outreach, financial analysis, legal review, and review by the Planning Commission and ADC. Staff would like to hire Elaine Howard who has assisted the ADC with similar proposals. A contract would be developed and executed within the City Manager procurement limit.

Public Works can begin a parallel effort to evaluate Bond Street and begin the conceptual design phase. However, until funds become available through the URA amendment, Bond Street cannot be reconstructed unless Council authorizes another source of funds. The timeline for the plan amendment process is 6 months while the reconstruction of Bond Street is approximately 2-3 months.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission authorize staff to pursue a plan amendment to include Bond Street, procure a consultant to develop a proposal that complies with ORS 457, and conduct outreach to property owners and residents along the proposed addition of Bond Street.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin A. Cronin, Community Development Director

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Cook, Public Works Director