



**CITY OF ASTORIA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 25, 2013
TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PAUL BENOIT, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: PROJECT STATUS REPORT – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

The following are summaries of Community Development Department projects and activities.

PLANNING PROJECTS

Astoria Transportation System Plan Update

Following the initial committee meeting in May 2011, DKS and their consultant team collected data and assessed the current conditions of the Astoria transportation network. In addition, they worked closely with Astoria, Clatsop County, and ODOT staff to update future forecasts of regional population, employment, and the corresponding traffic that will use Astoria's roadways. This step in the process was critical, as the traffic forecasts will influence the types of solutions that the project team and the community will identify and evaluate in the TSP.

In May 2012, a community open house was held at Astoria High School to gather information from the public on vehicular, bike and pedestrian issues. Additionally, stakeholder interviews were also held to gather input from various organizations and focus areas. Issues raised were analyzed by the consultant team and the Project Advisory Committee discussed this analysis at several meetings. A public meeting to discuss TSP issues was held on April 24, 2013. A presentation was subsequently made to the Planning Commission on May 7, 2013. Neighborhood meetings on specific issues in the TSP were held on June 12 and 13 resulting in a good community turn-out and valuable information for the TSP team. The neighborhood meetings focused on ideas being considered Downtown, Uniontown, and in the Peter Pan, South Slope Neighborhoods. Additional citizen advisory committee meetings were then held to discuss the recommendations and public comments.

A third Community Meeting was held on September 11, 2013 to present the draft TSP to the public for initial discussion. The public comments are currently being reviewed by

staff, consultants and will be reviewed by the citizen advisory committee at an upcoming meeting. Ultimately, the advisory committee will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission with regards to the TSP. The draft TSP will be then be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing. Should the Planning Commission recommend approval of the draft Transportation System Plan, the City Council will then hold a public hearing for consideration of TSP adoption. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings will be held in January 2014.

A project website has been developed for the TSP update at: www.wix.com/dksassociates/astoriatsp. The website link can also be found on the City of Astoria Community Development Department webpage. We want to encourage everyone to participate in the TSP update process via the project website. The website will help citizens keep up to date with progress, enter additional comments about Astoria's transportation network, and access project-related documents as they become available.

Flood Insurance Maps

Over the last few years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) have been developing new flood zone maps for the entire nation. In 2010, new FEMA maps were adopted with the knowledge that additional mapping would soon be completed by DOGAMI for coastal communities to better identify the "at risk" areas of each community. DOGAMI has completed a LIDAR survey of the entire Oregon coast, including Astoria, and had prepared a set of maps to identify potential hazard areas and to eliminate areas that were previously thought to be a hazard based on old, less detailed information. With the LIDAR survey, the maps now can identify the specific elevation of the land in more detail thereby removing guess work from the equation.

FEMA and DOGAMI requested that the local communities enter into a Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement represents a good-faith effort by all parties to share data, communicate findings, and plan mitigation activities to reduce the exposure of the citizens within the communities to hazard risk. It is intended to provide a common strategy to address hazards and increase resilience within the communities. While communities are not required to sign the Agreement, it is encouraged that all participants sign and enter into the Agreement. At their meeting on February 19, 2013, the City Council authorized the Mayor to sign the agreement.

Staff has been working with FEMA and DOGAMI to assure that the information and maps for Astoria reflect the issues and concerns specific to our community. . No new information has been presented to the City since the last Community Development Department Update as FEMA continues to analyze data. Staff will ultimately present them to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration once they are finalized by FEMA.

CODE AMENDMENTS

Riverfront Vision Plan Implementation

In August 2012, City Council authorized submittal of a funding application to the State of Oregon for drafting of Development Code and Comprehensive Plan language. This request was submitted to address the Council Goal of Vision Plan implementation. The State has explained that this funding mechanism is not a grant program whereby the City could hire a code writing consultant. Rather, the State would hire a planning contractor to develop the language from their pool of pre-approved consultants. The City was able to work with the State to select an appropriate company.

In October 2012, Community Development staff was notified that the State will allocate funding for this project to draft code language for two of the four Riverfront Vision Plan areas. The two areas selected for this funding were the Civic Greenway (16th to 39th Streets) and Bridge Vista (Port/Smith Point to 2nd Street). Staff negotiated a scope of work with the State and the project consultant, Angelo Planning Group. Under this program, the State has pre-selected consultants to complete funded projects. Staff who presently work with Angelo Planning Group were directly involved in completion of the Riverfront Vision Plan, therefore there will be a short learning curve to get started. The funding agreement has been finalized with the State of Oregon and was approved by City Council on August 5, 2013.

The consultant team has begun its work analyzing the City's Development Code and Comprehensive Plan language. When updating code language, the Planning Commission holds public work sessions to discuss the issues, gather community input, and provide direction to staff as to their recommended approach. It is anticipated that a work session to discuss Riverfront Vision Implementation for the Civic Greenway and Bridge Vista will be held late October.

Wind and Solar Energy Amendment

Beginning in 2010, the City saw an increase in inquiries for smaller scale wind energy facilities. Current Development Code language does not specifically address these issues. At the petitioning of a potential wind energy developer, the Planning Commission made an interpretation that wind energy facilities would be allowed similar to "utilities" in the IN Zone (Institutional) and S-2 Zone (General Development Shorelands) but that they needed to comply with the height regulations of those zones or obtain a variance.

The City subsequently received a grant from the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to assist in the development of an ordinance to address the location and review procedures for installation of wind and solar energy features in Astoria. DLCD anticipated that the draft ordinance could serve as a model for coastal communities. A number of Planning Commission work sessions have been held with regards to this matter where community members interested in this topic have participated in the discussion. The draft model ordinance was submitted to DLCD in December 2011 and the grant was closed.

This issue was brought back to the Planning Commission in August 2012 for a work session to continue discussions on draft ordinance language. The Planning Commission agreed that the two draft codes (wind and solar) should be addressed separately. Recent legislative changes have impacted how cities can regulate solar facilities. Staff has amended the draft solar energy ordinance to address these changes. A joint work session with the Planning Commission and City Council was held on January 22, 2013 with a presentation on solar energy technology and the changes in the industry. The Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission held work sessions in August 2013 and directed staff to prepare the final draft for public hearing before the Planning Commission for their September 24, 2013 agenda. The Planning Commission recommended approval at that meeting and the draft will be forwarded to the City Council for public hearing and final consideration for adoption at the October 21, 2013 City Council meeting.

After the solar energy ordinance is complete, the Planning Commission will continue work on the wind energy ordinance. Once the Planning Commission has held a public hearing(s) on this code language, it will be forwarded to City Council for final consideration.

Hillside Development Ordinance Amendment

In order to better address construction in geologic hazard and/or steep hillside areas, staff has been developing possible Development Code revisions to address this issue. Staff initiated this process several years ago but it was not finalized anticipating the integration of LIDAR study results. However, a preliminary draft was circulated among professionals in the field, the Planning Commission, City Council, and staff for review and comment. The LIDAR survey completed by the State Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) to identify areas of past slides and weak soil areas was completed. Staff has integrated comments received from the earlier draft and has been coordinating with DOGAMI to find the best way to integrate LIDAR information into the draft code language. With this new information/data, it was determined that it would be beneficial to establish "hazard zones" that could be addressed individually based on the severity of the hazard and the nature of the proposed work within the City. Work between the Planning and Engineering Departments continues on the draft ordinance.

Historic Properties Ordinance

In conjunction with the Adair-Uppertown Historic Inventory, staff worked on an amendment to the Historic Properties Ordinance. The Historic Properties Ordinance, Article 6 of the Astoria Development Code, was last updated in 1992. This Ordinance establishes how historic properties are designated, the process for review of exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, appeals, and lists exceptions to the review process. Within the last few years, the State and National terms used for historic properties has changed, and therefore, the City Historic Properties Ordinance needed to be amended to reflect the new terminology. Staff took the opportunity to improve and clarify the code at the same time to streamline the process for historic reviews. The proposed amendments would provide for three levels of review for historic properties (Types I, II, and III) rather than all requests being reviewed by the Historic Landmarks

Commission. The intent of these amendments is to make the process easier for the public and reduce the amount of time required for review. The proposed Code amendments would add the new State historic property classifications and references and would provide code provisions to improve the review process.

The City Council approved the Ordinance adopting the code amendments at their August 19, 2013 meeting.

URBAN RENEWAL

Garden of Surging Waves

On June 4, 2013, an extremely successful Garden of Surging Waves fundraiser, sponsored by Mayor Van Dusen was held at Jordan Schnitzer's residence in Portland. A number of individuals attended and a total of \$437,000 was raised. Following the fundraiser, City staff and the Garden of Surging Waves contractor Robinson Construction began negotiating a contract amendment to complete the project.

On February 19, 2013, City Council authorized the award of a construction contract to Robinson Construction Company in the amount of \$798,498 for the first sequence of the Garden of Surging Waves. Two pay adjustments were subsequently processed totaling \$16,202.83 bringing the contract amount to \$814,700.83. A third pay adjustment, totaling \$571,539.03, was approved by the City Council at their June 3, 2013 meeting which will allow for all remaining sequences to be implemented, bringing the full project scope to completion. Construction at the Garden of Surging Waves site is expected to be completed in November 2013. There is some delay on two of the glass elements on the project (a lantern that hangs in the pavilion and the donor screen) because of the timeframe to manufacture those pieces. Should they not be ready when all other construction is completed, the park can open and those glass items can be installed at a later time without closing the entire Garden to public access.

Astor-West Incentive Program for Development / Redevelopment

In order to address the City Council goal on this issue, staff has been collecting and reviewing information on City urban renewal programs for building facade grant and/or loan programs. Staff has also been talking to the staff of these Oregon communities to understand what has worked well in their respective cities. Starting in January 2013, staff has been working with City urban renewal consultant Elaine Howard to develop a program for the Astor-West District. Community Development staff are now developing a set of design guidelines and application process for the potential grant/loan projects. The draft program and process/guidelines will be submitted to the Development Commission for consideration this fall.

OTHER PROJECTS

Downtown Mainstreet Program

Staff has been working with the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA) on various components of this program. Planner Rosemary Johnson serves on the Design Committee as a liaison to the City. The Design Committee reviews and suggests ways to improve the aesthetics of the downtown. This committee manages the spring downtown clean up and was instrumental in getting merchants to adopt planters which were installed with the Downtown Streetscape project. The Design Committee is currently looking at developing directional / informational signs for the downtown area and are coordinating with Parks Director Angela Cosby on this project. They are currently proposing new street signs for the downtown that indicate that it is a National Register Historic District. The Committee has been in contact with City Engineer Jeff Harrington to coordinate their proposal to the City Council. The Committee has also been assisting downtown property owners in filling vacant storefronts with show window items. The Derelict Building Ordinance (at the request of ADHDA) requires vacant storefronts to have items placed in the windows to create the appearance of active storefronts. This could include historic photos or displays.

Community Development Director Brett Estes serves on the Business Development Committee which assists business owners in developing and / or growing their operations. The Business Development Committee is coordinating the Downtown Planning activities previously discussed.

The statewide Oregon Mainstreet Conference will be held in Astoria on October 2 to 4, 2013. Community Development staff are working with the coordinators of the conference and will be participating by leading or participating in conference sessions.

Development of Geographic Information System (GIS)

Development of the City's GIS has been a priority for both the Public Works and Community Development Departments so that paper maps and data can be digitized and accessed by citizens and more easily by City Staff. At their March 21, 2011 meeting, the City Council approved a contract with Mark Scott of Cartomation, Inc. for development of an online GIS whereby citizens can access information such as zoning, property dimensions, and aerial photography. That work is completed and has been added to the City of Astoria website.

Additionally, the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development has awarded the City a grant for this project. This grant would fund further inclusion of water, sewer and storm sewer infrastructure data, and historic designation status of properties. A revised contract with Cartomation was approved by the City Council in April 2012 to assist with this work. The addition of public infrastructure and historic information to GIS is progressing well and was finished this last summer. Staff have been trained on this new system and the software to run the program has been added to the permit counter on the first floor of City Hall.

Certified Local Government Grant

In alternating years, Certified Local Government (CLG) cities are eligible to submit grant applications to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for historic preservation

related work. On February 6, 2012 the City Council authorized submittal of a grant application, to conduct an updated historic inventory of the Adair-Uppertown Area. Additional work under this grant would include funds to help with historic building consultation on proposed projects by property owners. The grant was approved by SHPO and the City Council subsequently accepted the grant. The inventory has been completed and approved by the Historic Landmarks Commission at their June 18, 2013 meeting. SHPO has since advised the City that the inventory has been accepted as complete.

The original inventory in 1994 resulted in the designation of 111 properties as historic. The new inventory would have designated 226 properties prior to removal of properties of those who “opted out”. Throughout the process, the City advised the property owners several times of their right to “opt out” of historic designation upon written request prior to the June 18, 2013 designation. 47 property owners opted out bringing the final historic designation to 179 properties. The increase in designated properties is due partly to the expanded boundary of the inventory area, and the number of structures that were not eligible 19 years ago in 1994 but are now over 50 years old and can be considered as historic.

For the 2014-2016 grant cycle, staff proposes to submit a grant application to provide “pass-through” grants to business and/or property owners for facade renovations to commercial properties. The City provided a similar grant program in 2008 which resulted in several downtown building improvements. Additional information will be presented to the City Council for consideration of this grant application at a later date.

Historic Design Guidelines

Staff has been working with John Goodenberger to develop a set of residential design guidelines which would assist owners of historic properties with their restoration projects. The guidelines would identify best practices, not regulations. It will provide examples of good design features and materials that should be used or implemented when working on historic properties and will assist citizens through the historic design review process. It is intended as a tool for property owners to use when planning their projects. The design guidelines are anticipated to be completed before the end of the year.

City Hall Facade Renovation

City Hall interior renovation was completed in 2012. Several exterior features were not addressed during the previous renovations. Windows are steel and many are rusting and need to be reglazed. The front entry to City Hall has some rust and deterioration including one metal panel that was replaced with a wood panel many years ago. Staff got an estimate for repair of the first floor windows and the front entry doorway of \$14,250. At their September 24th meeting, City Council authorized submittal of two grant applications to help fund this project. One application has been submitted and the other is being prepared. The City should hear by late December or early January whether the applications will be funded.

US Coast Guard Housing

Over the last two years, the City has been working with the US Coast Guard (USCG) concerning potential expansion of their existing housing area on the South Slope. The property was sold by the City to the USCG in 1991 with a Memorandum of Agreement concerning development of the site. The Community Development Department received the Governor's Livability Award in 1995 for the existing housing area and its integration into the community. The USCG proposes to build approximately 50 housing units in two-family, three-family, and multi-family dwellings in two phases. The housing is proposed for the area north of the existing houses and would be accessed from Klaskanine Avenue. The USCG and staff have met several times over the last year to assure that the new development will comply with the intent of the Memorandum of Agreement and meet the requirements of the USCG. Part of the process included a street vacation for the unimproved Niagara Avenue which is located in the northern portion of the USCG property and a zone change to allow multi-family dwellings. The USCG has submitted an application for the street vacation which is pending in the Public Works Department. The zone change was approved by the City Council at their November 5, 2012 meeting. The USCG anticipates construction of these houses in 2013.

New / Expanding Business Brochure

Staff has been worked with Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR) to develop a brochure to address the City development process and provide information on available business development resources within the City. The brochure text has been completed. Hard copies are available in the lobby of City Hall and is also available on the City and CEDR websites.

Submitted by:

Brett Estes, Community Development Director