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ed to make the plan consistent with current planning and development policies?"

However, the issues behind the measure are anything but simple.

The urban renewal plan was created in 1968 with the notion that downtown would become a major retail shopping center. It was designed to use tax increment financing to help improve downtown's "urban blight" by funding improvements to existing buildings or services such as sewers and roads.

Bob Hibschan, downtown development section manager, said the original plan was written with the expectation that most of the projects the city wanted to accomplish could be completed in 10 years.

"This was admirable and most ambitious, but as we discovered, downtown development takes a long time. Port-

land has been working on its downtown development for 30 years," Hibschan said.

Paul Nicholson, COFACT member and candidate for city council, said the Oregon Legislature changed the law in 1977 to allow the urban renewal district to address "economic blight" by providing low-interest loans to developers for projects such as downtown parking structures.

The old plan set a number of goals for downtown, among them the consolidation of parking, separation of pedestrians and traffic, and an auditorium and hotel complex. Most of these have been completed, Hibschan said.

But the renewal district has had its share of problems as well. The renewal agency bought large tracts of downtown property to consolidate and sell in chunks to developers. Much of the property was

sold, but Hibschan said a two-block section was not, leaving the city with somewhat of a liability.

"City governments are not developers," Nicholson said, adding that the city has no clear vision of where it is going with the renewal plan.

He said several of the renewal agency's projects have gone bankrupt and are currently appraised at millions of dollars lower than they were in 1983. These include the Hilton Hotel, the Atrium, and the Citizens and Aster buildings.

People on both sides of the issue seem to agree that after 22 years, the urban renewal plan needs modernization.

Hugh Prichard, chairman of Citizens for Downtown, said the main problem with the existing plan is that it was designed to attract major retailers to the downtown mall.

"We're shackled by the view

from '68 that this would be a shopping mall," Prichard said. The plan does not allow many of the buildings in the district to be used for projects other than department stores, which Prichard said is unrealistic due to the national trend of suburban shopping malls.

If the ballot measure does not pass, the renewal agency will be forced to go through an amendment process for each site a developer wishes to use for purposes other than those specified in the 1968 plan.

COFACT and its members are hoping a defeat of the ballot measure will force the renewal agency to consult the public on the use of incremental taxes for development. Nicholson said the renewal projects have been largely autonomous and lacking in public input.

"If the update is defeated, the city council will be hamstrung and will either have to

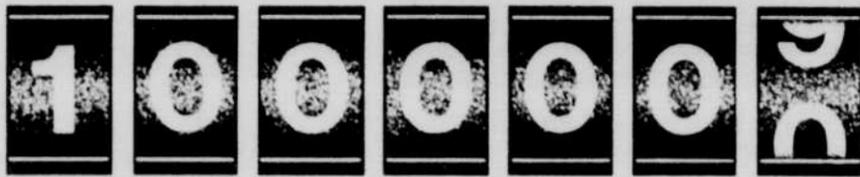
go to the public, come up with a new urban renewal plan, or pay off the bonds and drop the whole thing," Nicholson said.

Nicholson and other COFACT members estimate the urban renewal district costs the owner of a \$50,000 home \$30 to \$40 a year. Nicholson said the money has been mismanaged and that the plan creates an incentive for developers to use low-interest loans from the renewal agency for high-risk projects.

COFACT is circulating a reform proposal to revise the urban renewal plan, Nicholson said. Defeating the ballot measure will stop the city council from undertaking any new projects before the reform initiative can be analyzed, he said.

"Meanwhile, that leaves us with a 1968 plan hoping for Nordstrom to come to downtown. And Nordstrom isn't coming," Prichard said.

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