

Square: Some want to see more input from the community

Continued from Page 1A

as an interim step, the same idea the city had a decade ago when the old supermarket was demolished for an interim plaza while a permanent design for the block was debated. The supermarket's foundation collapsed after heavy rains in 2010, leaving the hole.

Cronin cautioned the advisory committee that the city could take another six months hearing public feedback and still have multiple opinions and a lack of clear consensus.

"I need to take some time to kind of process it and come up with the best solution," Cronin said afterward. "And I don't know what that solution is. Or if I have a solution."

Cronin has prepared a redevelopment strategy that outlines a handful of steps, including building community support, identifying development costs and a financing path, and marketing the square to the real estate development community.

He will likely take a version of that strategy to the City Council in December, and may — or may not — recommend a library and housing option. "The council has a choice to make a decision and live with that decision," Cronin said, "or they have the decision to not do anything and just continue to collect more input and do more listening in the community."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

A sign at Heritage Square explains the history of the site, as well as future steps going forward. The city is debating whether to build a new library and housing on the square.

A civic square

Mayor Arline LaMear and the City Council identified Heritage Square as a possibility for a new library and workforce housing after the library expansion into the Waldorf fell apart because of opposition from preservationists who want to save the old hotel. The concept is to turn the square, home to the Garden of Surging Waves, into a civic center that could help draw more people and business downtown.

Ingrid "Sunnie" Bell and

Mike Phillips, the commander of the American Legion Clatsop Post 12, which takes up a significant portion of Heritage Square, told the City Council on Monday that they oppose a new library and housing at the square. The Legion, which plans memorials, murals and other improvements to the post, prefers a plaza with a gazebo and kiosks representing the city's ethnic and cultural groups.

Bell, who has worked with

the Legion's auxiliary, also said that any redevelopment project should go before voters for approval.

Lack of consensus

The project advisory committee was not ready Thursday night to say whether a new library or housing should go on Heritage Square, a sentiment that, many on the committee believe, reflects the lack of consensus in the community.

The city held an open

house in October at Fort George Brewery and Public House's Lovell Showroom to show off some design options and has done other public outreach, but no favorite has emerged.

"This is big. I really would like more input from the community," said Norma Hernandez, the chairwoman of the city's Parks and Recreation Board, who serves on the advisory committee.

She said she has heard many different opinions, in-

cluding many that are unfavorable. "I don't think it will be fair to our citizens," she said of a recommendation. "I think they still need to voice more. Some of them are holding back. Some of them are still muddling about it — they need to think a little bit more about it."

Dan Stein, who works in commercial real estate and serves on the advisory committee, did not want to go beyond urging the city to fill the hole as an interim step. He

said, like several others on the committee, that he does not think a new library has to be at Heritage Square.

"I think that we're overstepping," he said. "I think that this group, candidly, is overstepping. I think that we were asked to investigate it. I think we've made a very good faith effort."

"From what we're seeing in the community, both at the meetings and anecdotally from all of us, that there really isn't a consensus."



A special thanks goes out to Trece Gurrad, vice-president of patient care services, for her dedication to United Way and its mission.

Trece is CMH's United Way representative and a member of the Board of the Clatsop County United Way.

Trece joined CMH in March of 2013. Since then, she has led several initiatives to improve patient care, including installation of a new nurse call system. Her dedication to CMH and its neighboring communities is apparent in her everyday actions.

Under Trece's leadership, CMH's United Way donation drive was fun and very successful. Thank you, Trece!


COLUMBIA
MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL

Thank you for your generosity

CMH Caregivers!

CMH Caregivers raised more than \$16,000 to support Clatsop County United Way during its recent fundraising drive. We are proud to support United Way as it improves the lives of people in our communities.

We encourage you too, to support United Way, which passes the money it raises on to worthy non-profits in Clatsop County.

