

Seaside: Southeastern areas would need to be annexed into city

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Improvements drive funding

Urban renewal is a financing program authorized under state law and implemented locally allowing the use of property tax revenues from city and regional taxing districts to grow the economy in blighted or underdeveloped areas.

Past Seaside urban-renewal plans paved the way for upgrades on the Turnaround and Prom, the city's sewage plant, 12th Avenue improvements and construction of a new library in 2008.

Using tax-increment financing, funding comes through increases in assessed values of local properties.

As new development arrives and existing properties are improved, assessments rise and see property-tax increases. Property taxes on the growth in assessed value in the urban-renewal area are frozen and increases are allocated to the city's urban renewal agency and not the taxing districts. Subsequent improvements can lead to higher home values and in turn higher assessments, ultimately generating more funds for the urban-re-

newal district.

The most significant funds could be slated for the longer-term, when the money accumulates.

"You're not going to have development in place in the early years because you're not generating any money yet," Winstanley said. "So, it takes a while to get this going. The major projects are always going to be on the tail end of an urban-renewal district, not in the beginning."

Numbers are forecast assuming 5 percent growth, Winstanley said. According to the report, the estimated total amount of tax increment revenues to service the \$68.5 million maximum indebtedness is \$78.5 million, made up of tax-increment revenues from permanent rate levies.

The urban-renewal area could be in existence for 25 years or until it reaches its maximum indebtedness, whichever comes first. "If you hit either one of those, you're done," Winstanley said.

Bridge upgrades

Projects to be completed using urban-renewal funds fall into four categories: school infrastructure, general infrastructure, business assistance



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Southeast Seaside Urban Renewal Plan includes work on bridges in the community such as the one shown here on Avenue G. The proposed work would include making the bridges compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and seismic standards.

and administration.

The school could see up to \$9 million in funds, designated for U.S. Highway 101 turn signals, road access to the new campus and sewer system needs, among other improvements.

Business assistance funds of \$300,000 could be used for storefront redesign, property acquisition, signage or workforce housing. Administration of the district is expected to exceed \$1.1 million.

Improvements in south Sea-

side make up the largest piece of the funding pie, with, by far, the largest portion of the estimated \$45 million considered for bridge improvements. The report identifies a need for new bridges at avenues A, G, S and U, each with a center turn lane, multipurpose path and Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible sidewalks.

"The amount of \$26 million equates to about \$5 million per bridge," Tom Horning, a geologist and first-term city councilor who ran on a plat-

form of tsunami preparedness. "This is a reasonable number under present conditions, but assumes subdued inflation."

According to Horning, the four bridges are essential tsunami-evacuation infrastructure. "They need to remain standing and be accessible by the public when the coming magnitude 9 earthquake strikes, because the earthquake will generate a tsunami that floods over Seaside within 20 to 30 minutes," Horning said. "The present bridges will not survive the shaking and will become impassable because of collapse, trapping residents and visitors alike. By replacing the bridges, we will save several thousand lives, if the quake happens during the summer."

The most important bridge to replace first is Avenue G, based on the number of people who are presently critically endangered and the time it takes to evacuate, he said.

A pedestrian footbridge could be even more important, Horning said. "In terms of saving the greatest number of lives, a pedestrian bridge that crosses near the south end of Holladay Drive would be the best use of limited funds."

A footbridge crossing the

Necanicum in the vicinity of Avenues N to S, budgeted at about \$5 million, could provide timely evacuation that none of the other bridges can, he added. "Given the community parks plan and our experience with other bridges we have replaced, having extrawide sidewalks and bike lanes is desirable, as well as a center turn lane for smooth traffic flow onto Holladay and to carry evacuation traffic in the event of tsunami."

Approvals needed

Because part of the land in the southeast Seaside urban renewal area is owned by the county, those areas would need to be annexed into the city. Annexation of county land requires approval from the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, which will consider the issue Wednesday.

At Seaside's Aug. 14 council meeting, councilors will consider whether the urban-renewal district is in compliance with city goals. "City councilors will be looking at it from the standpoint of the merits of the district and whether they believe the goals and the impacts of the district are acceptable to the city of Seaside," Winstanley said.

Eclipse: Forest Service bringing in extra rangers

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The nightmare scenario is a wildfire breaking out while roads are clogged with cars and campgrounds filled with people.

But there's also concern about thousands of people fighting for just a few open campsites, along with flip-flop-wearing hikers attempting to climb dangerous mountains.

"The thing we're worried about is people waking up the morning of the eclipse, heading out and expecting to find a campsite or beautiful place to view it," said Cody Norris, public information officer for Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri.

"Don't show up at the last minute," Norris said. "And once you're here, be prepared to get stuck somewhere for a long time."

Virtually all public campsites that can be reserved within the eclipse path were snapped up long ago, officials said.

But in places such as Illinois' Shawnee National Forest, all campgrounds are first-come, first-served. That could mean competition for sites given the number of people expected, forest spokeswoman Sue Hirsch said.

"We're expecting high numbers and I wouldn't be surprised if people got here pretty early," she said. "But it's hard to gauge how many people will actually show up, and we've opened up three other areas so we have room for everybody."

It's not just about where people spend the night, but also where they plan to view the eclipse.

McMahan said his office has fielded numerous calls from people planning to climb Mount Jefferson, Oregon's second-tallest mountain, to view the eclipse.

The problem is the 10,495-foot mountain is a dangerous and technical climb that's taken multiple lives in recent years.

Here's a few common questions — and answers — about what to expect in the outdoors during what's been dubbed the Great American Eclipse.

Why is this a big deal again?

At 10:16 a.m., the sky will go dark over Oregon.

The moon will pass in front of the sun, creating a shadow that will turn day into eerie twilight on earth. But the phenomenon will only be seen in total within a narrow path that happens to pass directly over Newport and Lincoln City, Salem and Albany, Detroit and Madras, into Eastern Oregon and then the rest of the nation.

That has meant eclipse chasers and lots of other people looking to see the phenomenon while having a fun vacation have spotlighted Oregon. Every hotel, motel, campsite and patch of grass has been booked — some for almost a decade.



Ian Sane/Flickr

Mount Jefferson is a focal point of interest for many of those traveling to Oregon for the 2017 total solar eclipse.

In terms of places to actually watch the eclipse, however, few places offer a more spectacular backdrop than Oregon's mountains. The sight of the sun-blocked disc shimmering above Cascade Range volcanoes has many photographers drooling.

All of this has led visitors to the state's vast swath of public lands on the coast, Cascades and Central Oregon.

Will I be able to drive to the coast or mountains?

This might be the toughest question to answer, because officials have no real idea how many people are going to show up.

Unlike a Super Bowl or World Series, where there's a defined number of people in the stadium, the count visiting Oregon could range from 200,000 to well over 1 million.

Either way, state highways are expected to be a mess from Aug. 17 to 22.

The most gridlocked roads are expected to be Oregon highways 18 and 22 between Salem and the Oregon Coast, along with Oregon 22/20 from Salem to Santiam Pass and Sisters, said Oregon Department of Transportation spokesman Lou Torres.

U.S. 101 and Interstate 5 could also be a major challenge.

"These are roads where traffic is already slow on normal summer weekends," Torres said. "Add this into the mix, and we're expecting severe congestion to total gridlock."

Torres suggested residents in places such as Lincoln City, Mill City and Detroit get their supplies in advance and try to avoid being on highways during the six-day window.

ODOT officials are planning to stage emergency responders at various locations in advance, but getting emergency vehicles to injured people in the event of a crash could be daunting.

"The message we're trying to spread is for people to get to their location early and stay there, well past the eclipse," he said. "If you are on the road, make sure you have extra food, water and gas, and make sure you think about a place to use the restroom. You might be there for a while."

All of this assumes just lots of people, but there are X factors as well. On eclipse day, if people wake up in Lincoln City to a foggy morning, there

could be a rush east on Oregon 18 which leads to an essential parking lot.

"I don't think any event (in Oregon's history) compares to this," Torres said.

Will there be any campsites open?

Every public campsite that can be reserved within the eclipse's path of totality has been snapped up, officials said.

Oregon state park campsites sold out more than 1,000 sites within an hour of opening for registration in April.

There are camping spots on private land available, but be ready to shell out serious money. Eclipse Camp, in Jefferson, is offering four nights of camping for \$499.

On public land, the only sites that remain are a handful of Forest Service first-come, first-served sites.

The first-come sites are typically at small campgrounds and are scattered throughout Siu-slaw, Willamette and Deschutes national forests (call ranger districts for details).

Nabbing one of those sites would likely require claiming it early — perhaps as early as 14 days in advance, the maximum length of stay allowed at a national forest campsite.

Where can I pitch a tent or stay overnight in national forest?

On public land — which in the eclipse path includes Siu-slaw, Willamette and Deschutes national forests — people are allowed to stay overnight pretty much wherever they please.

The practice of camping at sites that are not designated is known as "dispersed camping." People typically do it on the side of Forest Service Roads or by carrying gear to a specific spot.

"If you're planning to do it, we're asking people to think about leaving no trace and picking places that are already impacted," McMahan said. "Don't put a tent down or try to camp on fresh vegetation."

How serious is the fire danger?

That depends where you're headed. Fire danger becomes worse the farther east you go.

On the west side of the Cascades — around Detroit Lake, for example — the spread of a catastrophic wildfire is a con-

cern, but not an overwhelming one.

"There certainly is the risk of fire, but here on the west side, fires tend to be a little slower in spreading," said Grady McMahan, district ranger for Detroit Ranger District. "We're planning to have extra engines and support from the air staged at different places to fight the fires if they break out."

Fear is greater on the drier east side of the Cascades. Central Oregon — which is expected to see the greatest number of visitors — will have prime conditions for a fast-moving fire, Nelson-Dean said.

"We have a lot of tall grass from the wet winter and spring, and by late August, it's really going to be dried out," she said. "A single spark could get the grass and brush going. We will have teams staged and ready to respond, but it really could not be a greater threat in terms of wildfire and our ability to respond."

Should I climb Mount Jefferson to view the eclipse?

Only if you have a lot of mountaineering experience.

Oregon's second-tallest mountain has emerged as a focal point for people looking for that epic view of the eclipse, McMahan said. So has Three Fingers Jack and Mount Washington, which are both within the path of totality for the eclipse.

The problem is all three mountains are technical and very challenging, meaning unless you have experience, climbing them is an awful idea. Multiple people have died on the trio of mountains in recent years.

McMahan said the Forest Service is bringing in extra climbing rangers to be near the peaks and talk with people before they make a summit attempt.

"We're getting calls every day from people really excited about getting to that high point — particularly Mount Jefferson," he said. "But a lot of people clearly don't know what they're getting into. So we're trying to explain that, and the extra rangers will be there to make sure people are prepared and have the right equipment."

What about backpacking into wilderness spots like Jefferson Park?

Expect a lot of friends.

Hiking trails that lead to views of iconic mountains and the eclipse are expected to be very crowded, said McMahan and Nelson-Dean.

If you're planning to visit places such as Jefferson Park or Canyon Creek in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness, get there early and expect plenty of company.

Extra wilderness rangers will be at trailheads providing information about Leave No Trace principles.

Donihe: Ideas started flowing after his move to Astoria

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have a market," he said. "I just kind of wrote it for my own benefit, because I assumed there was no publisher for it."

While surfing the internet, Donihe found Eraserhead Press, a Portland publisher he said wanted the fundamentally weird books nobody else did. "I was like, 'Oh, my God; I finally found a publisher that is right for me.'"

Donihe joined the ground level of Eraserhead Press before the term bizarro fiction was coined in the mid-2000s. He described bizarro fiction as the genre of the weird, like the cult section of a throwback video store but for books. The genre appealed to him because of the total creative freedom.

"We thought it was just us for a while, but there is a true hunger for the weird," he said of the growing genre. "People's tastes are getting increasingly stranger over time."

Donihe has published at least 13 books under Eraserhead Press. Two of them — "Space Walrus," about the unrequited love of a walrus in a space station for a scientist experimenting on him; and "House of Houses," about the intimate love between a man and his house — have won best novel at the Wonderland Book Awards, the preeminent gathering of the bizarro fiction world for the past decade.

Donihe said he wants people reading his books to form an emotional connection to

things they might not otherwise bond with. He said many of his best ideas come from flashes out of his subconscious, which he immediately takes down and starts forming into stories. The system has largely worked for Donihe, who said he has been able to make a living as a full-time bizarro fiction writer for 20 years, until recently.

"I was feeling rather uninspired in my previous location," Donihe said of Tennessee. "I hadn't written a book in three years."

Donihe had friends in Astoria and a publisher in Portland. He started a GoFundMe account to finance his move to Astoria, where he said the ideas started flowing. Aside from his job at Fort George Brewery, Donihe has two books in the works.

One, he said, is inspired by his apartment on the edge of Uniontown, a Victorian monstrosity he said is rumored to be one of the last operating brothels in Astoria. Another, "Daddy, Please Don't Kill Me Again," is about a family man trying to escape a loop of repeatedly killing his family for the entertainment of the rich. Donihe said the latter is on contract for Eraserhead Press, due by the end of the month, and could be out as soon as early next year.

With a place to live, a job at Fort George Brewery and his creative juices once again flowing freely, Donihe said Astoria already feels like home.

— Edward Stratton

Weather: Dry weather will affect wildfire season

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A persistent high-pressure ridge offshore should steer rain clouds away from most of Washington and northwest Oregon. That doesn't bode well for the second half of wildfire season.

And it keeps Seattle, Portland and some other Northwest cities on track toward possibly setting new records for their longest dry spells.

The record dry streak for Seattle is 51 days of dryness, set in 1951. As of Friday, the 2017 dry streak stood at 34 days and counting. There have been six Julys with no measurable rain in Seattle: 1896, 1922, 1930, 1958, 1960 and 2013.

Portland has not received rain in 34 days either. But the race toward the record is a longer one. The Rose City's

record for consecutive days without measurable rain is 71 days, set in 1967.

A weak frontal system dropped scattered rain Thursday along the Pacific Northwest coast, in Olympia, Bellingham, McMinnville and Cascade Mountain rain gauges.

"The onshore flow moving from the Pacific to the interior of Western Washington and east of the Cascades looks like it is going to continue, some days a little stronger than others," Buehner said. "That can result in days with some morning clouds and then afternoon sunshine." "East of the Cascades it looks like it will continue to be warmer than the west side and as a result of the onshore flow also windy at times," Buehner added.