

Heritage Square: ‘The supportive housing component will solve several community challenges simultaneously’

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units would be priced very low, at about 30% of median family income, using project-based housing choice vouchers.

Southgate said two panelists stated opposition to the inclusion of the permanently supportive housing for Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, while the others were supportive.

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Meanwhile, the other developer, Related, pitched three scenarios for a four-story building.

The first scenario includes 115 units, 97 parking spaces and considerable open space.

The second scenario includes 101 units, 50 parking spaces and a smaller plaza adjoining Garden of Surging Waves.

The third scenario includes 76 units and 77 parking spaces.

Each option would primarily serve households at 60% of median family income. They would include a possible playground or outdoor recreation use for the smaller lot at 11th and Exchange. A midblock pedestrian walkway is envisioned to run from Duane to Exchange, along with a plaza in the northwest corner of the site adjoining the eastern entrance to the Garden of Surging Waves.

On the ground floor, the team suggested a flexible meeting space that can be used for training, education and social services



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

A hole sits empty and surrounded by a chain-link fence at Heritage Square.

programs.

Southgate said the panel appreciated aspects of both proposals, but opted for Edlen & Co. because of its experience and inclusion of local partners. Other reasons included the greater range of incomes the team proposed, he said, along with its more comprehensive proposal covering the entire block.

In order to apply for the state’s affordable housing funds this year, the developer must have “property control,” such as an option to purchase or a purchase sale agreement, by time of the application deadline in spring, Southgate said.

If the city moves forward with the proposal by Edlen

& Co., and the team secures state funding this year, construction could start in August 2023.

Edlen & Co.’s proposal included several letters of support from organizations, including the Astoria Co-op, Clatsop Community Action, the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization and the county Board of Commissioners.

“The supportive housing component will solve several community challenges simultaneously,” Viviana Matthews, the executive director of Clatsop Community Action, wrote. “It will increase the eligible workforce housing in the downtown area; it will support

individuals who need extra assistance to remain successfully housed; and it will reduce the number of individuals who are currently homeless.

“Furthermore, the city can pride itself in having made concerted effort to address a complex problem that effects every community member.”

Mark Kujala, the chairman of the Board of Commissioners, said the project is an opportunity to “increase the viability and the availability of future workers and to proactively move individuals off the street who want to work but need a safe place to call home and the support of CBH to do so.”

Energy: The biggest decreases in emissions in the Northwest will come over the next few years

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Heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions, such as those generated by coal plants, are warming the planet, scientists said. A new report from NASA concluded 2021 was the sixth-warmest year on record, tied with 2018. The past eight years combined for the warmest since record-keeping began in 1880, according to the report.

In the Northwest, states have set renewable energy goals to eventually use carbon-neutral energy sources. Thus, retiring coal plants and reducing natural gas generation.

Right now, at least 50% of the region’s power supply comes from hydropower, Charles said, which means the Northwest emits much less carbon dioxide overall than the rest of the U.S.

According to the most recent council data, renew-

able energy such as wind power contributed to fewer greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest. In addition to fewer emissions, renewable energy advocates said a growing list of renewable energy projects in the Northwest could help lower energy bills across the region.

The biggest decreases in emissions in the Northwest will come over the next few years as coal plants retire, Charles said.

However, the region won’t be able to simply subtract coal plant emissions as the plants go offline, Charles said. It all depends on what type of energy replaces the coal plants, she said.

“Are we relying more on our natural gas, which will then contribute to our emissions? Maybe not as potent, but natural gas still contributes to emissions,” Charles said.

Now, natural gas helps fill in the gaps when slow water

flows cause less hydropower generation, she said.

Preliminary data from 2021 shows a slight decline in heat-trapping emissions, Charles said. Several coal plant retirements happened near the end of 2020.

“We haven’t really seen the full effects of those retirements on the emissions and the power supply,” Charles said.

In addition, the Northwest is expecting significant renewable energy development over the next 20 years, Charles said, spurred in part by clean energy policies in Washington state and Oregon, which will help decrease heat-trapping emissions.

An increase in renewable energy development is starting right now, said Fred Heutte, senior policy associate with the renewable energy advocacy group NW Energy Coalition. More renewable energy projects than natural gas devel-

opment appear to be in the works, he said.

“We’re not seeing a lot of interest in new gas power plants at least for the rest of this decade,” Heutte said.

In addition to what Heutte called an enormous wave of renewable energy projects, he said he’s seeing an increase in battery storage and smart technology that helps customers use energy when it’s not in peak demand.

An increase in renewable energy development could help lower energy bills, Heutte said. Once renewable energy facilities are built, you don’t have to pay for other fuel prices, he said, noting that natural gas prices have risen over the last few months.

“If you know what your energy costs are going to be — because you don’t have the fuel cost going forward — that really helps stabilize the bills you pay your utility,” Heutte said.

Dillon: ‘I long to share ideas and experiences with one another’

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ARTstoria art gallery in August. The gallery is on Commercial Street, right above RiverSea Gallery.

“I had a small second floor gallery in a historic building in downtown Billings, much like I found here,” she said. “It just seemed like a perfect fit.”

While in Billings, Dillon originated a series of free monthly discussions called “Artful Women of Montana” at a local library. The discussions featured authors, actors, artists, journalists, choreographers, filmmakers or anyone involved in the arts.

“I also started an artists’ salon with author Russell Rowland called ‘Words and Pictures,’ a place to gather for anyone involved in the arts to discuss projects they have going, share advice, expertise and camaraderie,” she said.

“I would like to participate in a similar venue for discussion here in Astoria as the pandemic allows.”

It is, she said, “important to come together as an artistic community, and I long to share ideas and experiences with one another.”

Dillon has a home studio in Astoria where she paints, then shows her work and other gift items at the gallery. She also stays connected with the art scene in Montana.

“I’ve shown at a number of galleries and group shows across the country,” she said. “Right now, I’m into museum auctions in Montana at the Missoula Art Museum and Yellowstone Art Museum.”

The pandemic has slowed foot traffic at most galleries, but through her website — conniedillon.com — Dillon said, “I’ve been shipping out more work, because people are inside more, and they want to improve their surroundings.”

ARTstoria is open randomly. “Just look for the sidewalk sign out front,” she said, otherwise, Dillon can set up appointments “and be there in five minutes.”

She adds, “The reason I named it ARTstoria is the play on words, but I like to hear stories, and I think the art has its own narrative. People are really open with me at the gallery, telling me where

they’re from and their own story. Having written one-act plays and performed, the stories are valuable to art.”

Dillon describes her works as “mostly nature scenes. I’m not a portrait artist. I like to do landscapes, close-ups of leaves and flowers, and trees from different perspectives. Like looking up through the tops of the trees, as if you’re walking through the forest.”

With plenty of water around, whether it’s the Columbia River, the ocean, or coming down from above, this winter’s wet weather can be a big plus for artists, she said.

“I just painted a waterfall that’s off Pipeline Road. It’s a seasonal waterfall, because I didn’t see it last summer. The Fort to Sea Trail is a lovely place to go. My favorite beach is Gearhart.

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Connie Dillon | Astoria artist

“Each beach has its own personality,” she said. “Cannon Beach has Haystack Rock, and between the (Peter Iredale) shipwreck, Gearhart and Seaside, what you find on each beach is so different.”

Dillon has her favorite places, such as Shively Park and the trails around the Astoria Column.

And, “I have to say that for a small town like Astoria, having an independent art supply store is a real joy. The Dots ‘N Doodles Art Supplies (on Marine Drive), a place for artists to buy locally, is fantastic.”

She added, “I think Astoria has a very healthy art community. I love the variety. There’s as many galleries here as we had in Billings ... There’s a lot of really top-notch art in Astoria. I can see it building into a strong art community. I see Astoria as the gateway to the Oregon Coast.”

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