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Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium

Sea lions roam the waters around Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. The historic lighthouse has been used as a columbarium for decades, but is now for sale.

HERITAGE SQUARE

New outline includes plaza

The change came after public feedback

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Edlen & Co., the developer collaborating with the city on a proposed workforce housing project at Heritage Square, unveiled a new outline Thursday during a second open house at the Astoria Armory.

Stuart Emmons, the project's architect, said the new concept incorporates some of the public feedback from the first open house earlier this month.

The change would create room for a large plaza along Duane Street near the Garden of Surging Waves. The open space would be flexible and could be used as parking, by the Astoria Sunday Market or for other activities. A parking lot with 24 spaces would sit behind the plaza.

Some critics of the workforce housing project have called on the city to pursue a plaza, amphitheater or park at Heritage Square, which were among the original ideas after the city acquired the former Safeway property two decades ago. Over the past several years, the City Council has made housing a goal at Heritage Square.

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'TERRIBLE TILLY'

A STORIED NORTH COAST LANDMARK GOES ON THE MARKET

Owner is asking for \$6.5 million

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
KMUN

'Terrible Tilly,' the historic 141-year-old Tillamook Rock Lighthouse off the coast near Cannon Beach, is for sale.

Mimi Morissette, the owner, listed the property for \$6.5 million. She had once hoped to turn the decommissioned lighthouse into a large columbarium, a place to store people's cremated remains. There was room, she said, for up to 300,000 urns.

But Morissette's plan never really took off.

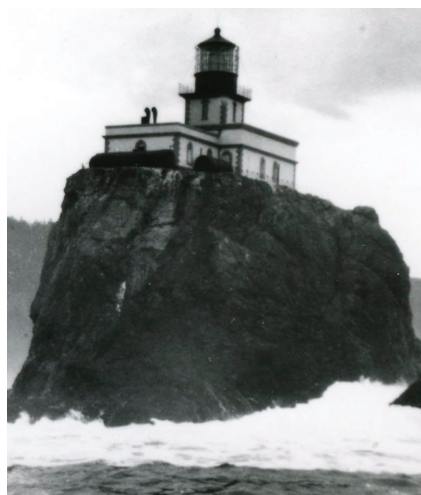
Forty-two years later, the ashes of only 31 people, including Morissette's parents, have been laid to rest at the lighthouse. Morissette, who is 77, has concluded it is time for someone else to take over.

"It is time for me to pass the baton," she said.

An ad went out this week and Morissette is confident she'll find a buyer.

"I think it's a given," she said. "I think I'll sell it and I think I'll close it by the end of the year."

She traveled this week to a conference in Las Vegas to seek out potential buyers. She told KMUN she connected with a large cemetery brokerage and consulting firm that has several potential buyers in mind.



The Tillamook Rock Lighthouse is notorious for the lives claimed during scoping and construction.

Challenges

Morissette bought the property with her business partners in 1980 and began selling spaces for urns, but cremation was less common at the time. Then, the columbarium lost its state license in 1999 and, despite a fight, she was unable to renew it.

She was also dogged by consumer complaints filed with the state Department of Justice about how remains were stored in the lighthouse and issues with refunds. Some families told the New York Times in 2007 that they felt misled by promises made by Morissette's company, Eternity at Sea Inc. In the 1990s, vandals reportedly broke into the lighthouse and made off with two urns.

Morissette said when Eternity at Sea

started selling spaces in the columbarium, they hadn't realized the metal they were using to house urns could not withstand a maritime environment. Then there was the issue with the state license that dragged on for years. Morissette said she pushed pause to regroup.

Whoever buys Terrible Tilly will be taking on a difficult-to-reach island property that — besides acting as a home to the dead — shelters seabirds like cormorants and common murrens on its basalt crags. Sea lions are known to haul out on the rocks below. In fact, the last time Morissette tried to visit the island, she couldn't leave the helicopter because there were too many sea lions blocking the way.

Terrible Tilly, built in the 1880s, became notorious for being dangerous as well as expensive to operate. It was decommissioned in 1957.

Today, the lighthouse exerts a strong pull on amateur and professional artists and photographers and can be seen from various viewpoints within the popular Ecola State Park.

The lighthouse is a privately owned part of the federal Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service holds a conservation easement over the property. According to Brent Lawrence, a spokesman for the Fish and Wildlife Service, Morissette has agreed to only visit the island at certain times of the year to avoid disturbing birds during the breeding season.

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City leaders hear concerns about homelessness, businesses

Forum comes amid tensions downtown

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

A community forum on homelessness and livability drew questions and concerns about safety and support for the homeless and downtown businesses.

A panel of city, business and social services leaders shared information and answered questions from the public during the discussion Wednesday night at the Liberty Theatre.

The forum was organized amid growing public frustration over behavioral issues and quality of life concerns that stem from an increasingly visible homeless population. In the coming weeks, the Astoria City Council will consider adopting ordinances to give police more tools to respond to some of the issues.

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At the old JC Penney, Vintage Hardware hopes for a permanent home

Antique store moves to Commercial Street

By ABBEY McDONALD
The Astorian

People passing by occasionally cheered Paul Tuter as he worked on the wire fence this week outside the former J.C. Penney Co. building downtown. He raised his hammer in greeting.

The word was: Tuter and Becky Johnson, the co-owners of Astoria Vintage Hardware, would

be moving their business into the Commercial Street building that has been vacant for five years.

"Vintage Hardware is so blessed and the community has always loved us, and we're a real community-based store. And they've always rallied and supported us when we've been in a real estate jam, when we've had to find new locations," Johnson said. "It means so much."

She said it will be the sixth time in about a dozen years that Vintage Hardware has relocated. They last moved in 2016 after being asked to vacate the building that would become Mo's Restaurant.

This time, Johnson said Vintage Hardware is moving because their lease expired on Marine

Drive and they anticipated a rent increase.

"It was just realizing it was kind of time to take destiny into our own hands, and not be in the position of being a tenant and not having that security," she said. "(I) just talked to my family and we all decided it was an investment that we wanted to pursue and now it will be Vintage Hardware's forever home."

Knowing the J.C. Penney building was a potential option, Johnson reached out to owner Sean Fitzpatrick, who bought the building in 2018 with Chris Holen, the chef and co-owner of the restaurant Nekst.



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Vintage Hardware is moving into the old J.C. Penney Co. building on Commercial Street.

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