



Alex Murphy

A second open house on a proposed workforce housing project at Heritage Square was held Thursday at the Astoria Armory.

Open house: City Council could vote on the next step on April 4

Continued from Page A1

The revision to the outline would remove retail space and office space for Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare's Open Door program from the ground floor. The mental health agency is partnering with Edlen & Co. on a supportive housing component for people struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues and facing homelessness.

The four-story building would sit on the eastern portion of the block and include a community room on the ground floor along Duane. It would also include offices for two Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare housing retention specialists and for Open Door staff when they come to work with clients. A room would also be dedicated for a live-in resident manager.

Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, said the removal of the Open Door program was not her first choice.

"While my preference was to have Open Door on-site, having a captive audience within the building is still better than what we have now because our clients would be easier to find and to provide ongoing support," she said.

The program's staff, which include case managers, therapists and nursing staff, will be able to use the offices dedicated to the housing retention specialists when they visit clients, Baker said. The live-in resident manager will ensure the building remains tidy, things run smoothly and that the residents are abiding by the good-neighbor agreement.

"We would also have a community space for the residents where we can have community meetings, recovery groups and other pro-

gram-focused activities," Baker said.

The building would include up to 97 apartments. Sixty-four of the units would serve people earning 60% to 80% of area median income. That means, to be eligible, most workers would need to earn around \$14.74 to \$19.65 an hour, or \$30,660 to \$40,880 annually, using 2021 figures.

The other 33 units would be reserved for supportive housing priced for people at 30% of area median income.

The open houses were an opportunity for Edlen & Co., a Portland-based developer, to finalize the basic outline before the City Council decides whether to take the next step on the project in April.

The City Council will hold work sessions on Wednesday and Friday covering financing and what commitment would be needed from the city to move forward.

In order to apply to the state for government financial help this year, the developer must meet the application deadline on

April 22.

The City Council could vote on whether to take the next step on April 4.

If city councilors agree to move forward, there would be a pause until August, when Edlen & Co. expects to hear whether the application for government funding has been approved.

If the team secures state funding this year, it would resume the design process, community engagement and review by the city's Historic Landmarks Commission.

If the project is approved by the city, construction could begin by the summer of 2023 and could be completed by 2025.

IF THE PROJECT IS APPROVED BY THE CITY, CONSTRUCTION COULD BEGIN BY THE SUMMER OF 2023 AND COULD BE COMPLETED BY 2025.



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Paul Tuter, the co-owner of Vintage Hardware, works to add a gate into the fencing of the old J.C. Penney Co. building.

Store: Vintage Hardware plans to open at new location in mid-May

Continued from Page A1

Fitzpatrick serves on the Astoria Planning Commission, owns Wecoma Partners and the Illahee Apartments and is running for mayor.

"She felt that it was time to change locations and I wanted to have her in there," Fitzpatrick said. "The building lends itself well to that and I figured she would be the perfect tenant to put in there."

He said the building's large windows and open space will be a good fit for the furniture and vignettes on display.

Fitzpatrick and Holen had planned to develop a high-end food court in the space, and hoped to split the 6,500-square-foot main floor between several restaurants and vendors.

Fitzpatrick said they could not complete the plans due to supply chain issues and challenges in securing bids.

"It was unfortunate that it didn't happen as Chris and I had originally hoped, however, two years ago today I had no regrets that it hadn't gone through. Because I would have been sitting on a fully improved building that would have had to sit vacant for several months," he said, referring to coronavirus pandemic closures.

He said the vacancy allowed him to donate the space to two local nonprofits during the pandemic: Cinderella's Closet through the Assistance League of the Columbia Pacific and Innovative Housing Inc.

J.C. Penney first opened in Astoria in 1916 and moved into the Commercial Street building in 1928. The department store closed in 2017.

"Cities like Astoria relied on having J.C. Penney for certain things. It's unfortunate that they made that decision, but I think that Vintage Hardware doing their retail is going to be great in that location," Fitzpatrick said.

Vintage Hardware doesn't plan to renovate the interior beyond cosmetic repairs.

"It is a lot of pressure. It is such a responsibility because that building is so iconic and just means so much to people," Johnson said. "So I feel really blessed and it's really an honor to be a steward of that building."

In 2019, the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association secured nearly \$150,000 from the state, paired with a \$103,640 local match, to restore the Duane Street facade of the building to reflect its original architecture.

The group received an extension on the grant, and Johnson said they have begun the restoration process.

Vintage Hardware plans to open at the new location in mid-May.

"We're just so thrilled to bring life back into a beautiful, important building, to be on Commercial Street to be part of that traffic," Johnson said. "It's just a real exciting opportunity for Vintage Hardware and we're happy to know that we'll be around for a long time."

Forum: 'Everybody's out there trying to do their best just like you'

Continued from Page A1

"The vast majority of the homeless population are not there by choice," Police Chief Geoff Spalding said. "They don't want to be in that position. And they do need help."

"We're talking about a small percentage of individuals who choose not to conform to community standards. And those are the ones that we as a police department want to hold accountable," the police chief said. "I think people are fed up. But at the same time, we can't lose sight that we're still dealing with humanity."

The panel included representatives from the city, the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, Clatsop Community Action, Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare and LiFEBoat Services. Representatives from Clatsop Economic Development Resources, the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association and the Astoria Warming Center assisted in sorting through questions from dozens of people in the audience.

Alison Hart, a consultant and former executive director of the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, read the questions and comments and guided the discussion.

David Reid, the executive director of the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, outlined concerns about camping, loitering, threatening behavior and trash downtown.

He called for collaboration, but said the problems cannot continue.

"I encourage you to continue to care for the people in our midst who are suffering and needing, but not to forget those who are doing nothing more than trying to make a living and a positive contribution to our city and our way of life," Reid said. "Because those people deserve our compassion, too."

"Right now, many residents and business owners are mad at the current situation," he said. "I know I'm mad. We all deserve better than this. I just don't want us to be mad at each other. Because we deserve better than that, too."

Sheriff Matt Phillips noted that the past two years have been challenging for everyone in the community. "And it's issues that are largely out of our control as individuals, like the pandemic," he said. "And I think that leaves us

hungry to control those things that are near and dear to us."

Questions and comments from the audience ranged from how police can help downtown businesses, the makeup of the homeless population and who will protect homeless people from harassment.

In addition to the tools under consideration by the City Council to address behavioral issues, Spalding encouraged businesses to sign up for the city's Property Watch program, which authorizes police to take action against unwanted activity at storefronts and other private property after hours or when owners cannot be contacted.

Viviana Matthews, the executive director of Clatsop Community Action, said the agency's annual point-in-time count has shown that over 80% of the homeless population has lived in Clatsop County for more than a year and a half.

Mayor Bruce Jones said Astorians have a right to demand that those who choose to live in the community respect a common set of community standards for behavior. But he was also critical of people who have posted photos and videos on social media of homeless people who are in distress.

"And posting it online as if to say, 'Look at this, isn't this horrible,' and I feel it's kind of disgusting to put someone in that position," Jones said.

When one of the questions from the audience asked for examples of success stories, Erin Carlsen, who works with Filling Empty Bellies and LiFEBoat Services, asked people who were near the back of the theater if anyone would join the panel on stage to share their story.

Monica Gibbs, who was formerly homeless and now works at LiFEBoat Services, said she had sought assistance from nearly all of the social services organizations represented.

"And because of them, I'm alive, let alone housed," Gibbs said. "It's not an easy road. I've been housed off and on for a really long time. It takes one choice. I chose the wrong person. I wound up homeless."

"Everybody talks about the people that's on the street," she said. "Everybody says stuff. That's me. That's them."

"Everybody's out there trying to do their best just like you. It just takes us a little bit longer. So please, just be patient."

Tilly: Morissette does not regret purchase

Continued from Page A1

While cormorants and common murre roost at the property, they no longer appear to nest there like they once did historically. Black oystercatchers, however, have been documented breeding there. The oystercatcher's global population is small and citizen scientist volunteers closely monitor nesting activity near Cannon Beach.

'Something that we all have to face'

Morissette said she was raised around lighthouses and her first priority for Terrible Tilly has been to ensure its preservation. If the lighthouse sells, she is dedicating \$1.5 million of the proceeds to put back into repairs and cleanup at the property. Morissette plans to retain a 3% royalty on future urn niche sales.

Though her plans for a columbarium were not as lucrative or straightforward as she had

hoped, Morissette does not regret her purchase all those decades ago.

The lighthouse is an important part of American history, she said, and she's proud to have had a hand in keeping it standing.

Then there are the 31 urns. The families of the people whose ashes are stored inside Terrible Tilly cannot visit them.

But this is how Morissette sees it: You can ride a horse down the beach. You can throw a flower to the waves. You can hike to viewpoints in Ecola State Park, maybe hold a family reunion at the park. You can go salmon fishing nearby and take time to say "hello" to the loved one in the lighthouse.

"So in other words," Morissette said, "I've been able to take something that we all have to face and sort of take the macabre out of it."

This story is part of a collaboration between The Astorian and Coast Community Radio.

**Shop locally online
AND GET
GREAT DEALS!**

DiscoverOurCoast
Deals.com

**Gift certificates
on sale now at a
20% discount**
RESTAURANTS • LODGING
FURNITURE • SHOPPING

Hurry! Limited quantities available
Gift certificates mailed within 3 days of online purchase

discoverourcoastdeals.com | dailyastorian.com
chinookobserver.com | seasidesignal.com
coastweekend.com | discoverourcoast.com