

Downtown: Expanded plan ready for approval

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commercial and residential property in the district, retain the existing businesses and attract new ones.

"Urban renewal districts provide cities in Oregon one of the only tools to get projects done, other than solely being dependent on grants or development charges," Cronin said.

There are lots of projects on the city's downtown to-do

list.

Multiple city groups have been working to improve downtown and the urban renewal plan serves as a blueprint, giving them direction, a timeline and a funding source. Recently, the city applied for and received designation as an Oregon Main Street, which brings coordination help and possible grants for improvements.

"Now that we have an Or-

egon Main Street project, I feel like we will make more progress," Cronin said. "The good news is that we're able to increase the amount we can collect without increasing the taxes or sunset date or boundary because the district has performed well and above our expectations. ... We're trying to make good use of these funds to make something happen in the downtown."

Growth is expected when an area's image improves through things like landscaping, benches, attractive trash cans, lighting, public art and other aesthetically pleasing amenities, according to Elaine Howard Consulting, which wrote the revised urban renewal plan.

Projects included in the plan for the next decade include:

- Placing the power lines underground along South Main Avenue from Harbor Drive to Second Street, \$1.2 million.

- Rebuilding a public pier at Warrenton Marina, \$1.2 million.

- Extending the public sewer system on South Main to serve properties near the former Twin Spruce Tavern, \$319,550.

- Adding more sidewalks and lighting downtown, \$132,600.

- Establishing a housing rehabilitation and improvement program, \$130,480.

- Improving gateways into downtown with sidewalks and landscaping, primarily Harbor Drive and South Main, \$125,000.

- Paving the parking lot adjacent to the fire station on Main Avenue, \$106,000.

- Establishing a loan or guarantee program that would assist businesses looking to expand or redevelop, \$105,000.

Tax growth within the Urban Renewal District hovered around 7 percent from 2009 to 2018. But this year, the tax growth is expected to be 11.5 percent and to continue at that rate.

The district is anticipated to complete all projects and have sufficient tax money to finance it until the district terminates in 2028.

The public is invited to an open house on the revised urban renewal plan at 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 15. It will be followed by a Planning Commission meeting.

Next, consultants working on behalf of the city will brief the Port of Astoria, Clatsop County and the Warrenton-Hammond school district. Even though there are no changes in property taxes within the urban renewal boundary, state law requires informing agencies with boundaries overlapping the district.

The City Commission is expected to hold a public hearing Sept. 24, followed by a final vote at its Oct. 8 meeting.

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