

Residents question need for growth boundary expansion

Commission considers land use, demographics

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

As Seaside planning commissioners wade through consideration of an Urban Growth Boundary Expansion, some residents are wondering if the process is even necessary.

Buz Ottem, a landowner, said Seaside does not have adequate infrastructure to support its current population in case of an earthquake or tsunami, so it does not make sense to accommodate population growth. "We have the cart in front of the horse, and we shouldn't even be discussing it," he said. "We can't provide for the safety of the residents we have here."

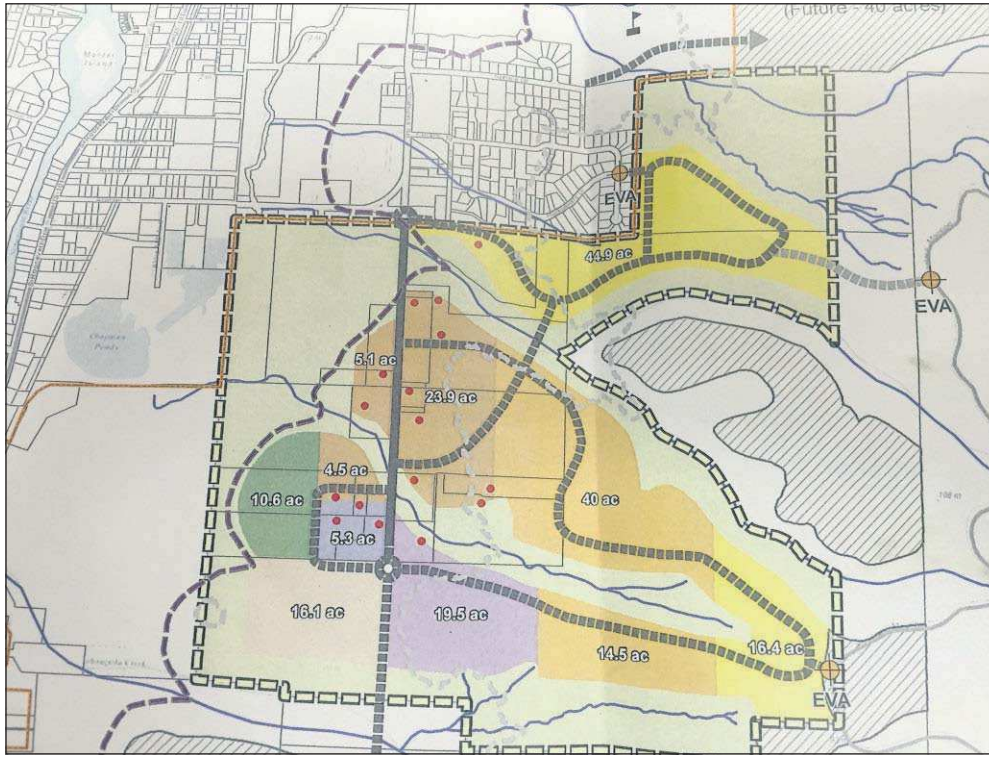
For a fourth month, the commission listened to public comments on amending Seaside's comprehensive plan to incorporate about 200 acres of new land into the Urban Growth Boundary during a meeting Oct. 6. The Southeast Hills site under consideration is located to the south and east of Seaside city limits near South Wahanna Road. A new potential site on the northern boundary of Seaside was also thrown into the mix.

"What do we want the community to be?" asked Planning Commission Chairman Ray Romine. "What do we want the community to have available for residents going into the future? The land we choose will significantly impact the future of who we bring to the community and who can afford to stay."

Considering the North Hills

In response to requests to review alternatives to the Southeast Hills, the commissioners considered the North Hills site, east of North Wahanna Road. Currently the site is accessed from Shore Terrace and Forest Drive.

Vernonia resident Mike Pihl owns about 40 acres on the North Hills site and proposed that area be incorporated into the Urban Growth Boundary. The area is easily



The Southeast Hills area considered for a potential Urban Growth Boundary expansion.

accessible and outside the tsunami inundation zone, he said, two factors commissioners are considering throughout the process.

Commissioner Tom Horning, a geologist, said he is concerned about heavily developing the property, which has "large blocks of landslide material that have moved down the hill and are still probably moving, to some degree."

"It's not a great place to put a neighborhood," he said, adding he thinks it would be appropriate for an unapproved campground or tsunami evacuation site instead. "Our planning process is not designed around landslides, but one cannot disregard that when making considerations between property A and property B."

He and other commissioners favor the Southeast Hills site as the better option, citing concerns that only a third of the 60-acre North Hills site would likely be suitable for development.

The city is mandated to use land in the Urban Growth Boundary efficiently, so it is not wise to include property that can't be developed, City Planner Kevin Cupples said.

If the city cherry-picked land from the North Hills site that reasonably could be developed, the next issue would be drawing a map

"that's a realistic configuration" for the boundary, said consultant Don Hanson, of Otak Inc.

"There are benefits to a compact city limit and a compact UGB," he said.

Even if the city took some land from the North Hills site, a portion of the Southeast Hills likely would be incorporated, since a landside analysis completed at the start of the project called for about 200 acres to satisfy Seaside's estimated population growth during the next two decades. "I like to call it a 'balance sheet,' because that's basically what it is," Cupples said.

What's best for Seaside

Residents, primarily landowners in the Southeast Hills area, have attended the past several meetings to get more information and question why Seaside needs to expand its developable land at all. They remain unconvinced the city needs that much land in the boundary and worry the rural characteristics of the South Wahanna Road area are at stake.

Southeast Hills residents Mary Kemhus and Maria Pincetich said they feel the growth indicators used for calculating how much land Seaside needs are not accurate. The city's population

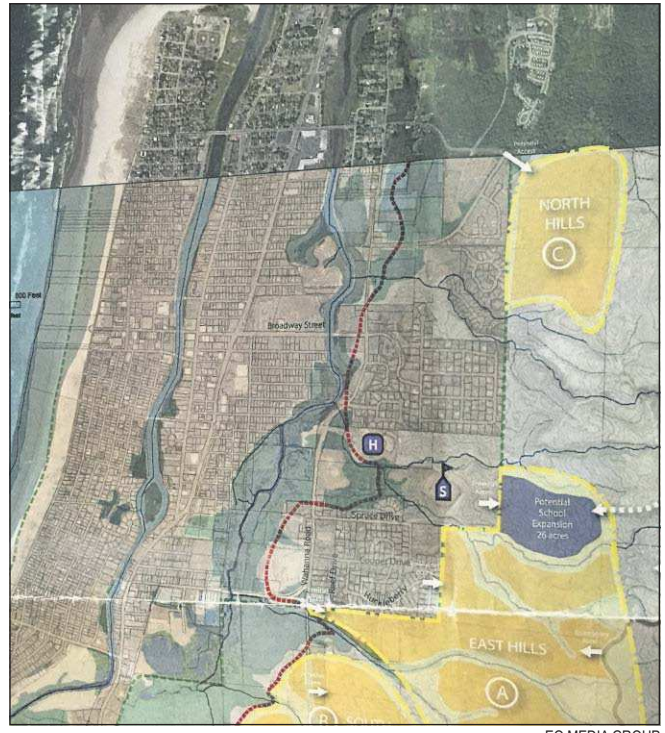
is not growing as much as estimated several years ago using 2000 census data. Seaside's recent annual growth rate has been closer to 0.7 percent rather than 1 percent, as forecast.

Taking into consideration the July New Yorker article "The Really Big One" and the recent Oregon Public Broadcasting series "Unprepared," Kemhus expects fewer people will want to live in Seaside.

She said she prefers the city develop the land currently in the Urban Growth Boundary.

Pincetich referenced a letter from Mia Nelson, an urban specialist with 1000 Friends of Oregon, a non-profit organization dedicated to building livable urban and rural communities throughout the state. The organization received many calls and emails from concerned citizens regarding Seaside's proposed expansion and Nelson wrote a reply to several questions that arose.

The organization said the city should calculate its land using updated demographics, excluding "seasonal, recreational or occasional use" visitors. If those numbers were considered, "The combined effect of these choices would substantially reduce the need for a UGB expansion," Nelson said.



The North Hills area offers 60 acres of land, but much of it may be unsuitable for development.

Action required by state

Pincetich said she is concerned the city is using outdated and questionable data in determining Seaside's future growth.

"It would be best to have confidence in the numbers before we move forward, or as we move forward," she said. "The math does not support it to me. We have other options."

Pincetich said the city should wait at least until June 2017 when Portland State University's Population Research Center is scheduled to issue a new population forecast for Seaside.

North Coast Regional Representative for the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

Patrick Wingard agreed the city is not legally obligated to expand its Urban Growth Boundary, since its population is less than 25,000.

However, he said state planning goals state municipalities should establish and change urban growth boundaries based on long-range planning, population forecasts and future housing needs.

While Seaside may not be legally required to expand the boundary, Wingard advised the city to pursue their expansion.

Failing to maintain a 20-year land supply, important for avoiding population intensification within city limits and providing workforce housing, "does not seem like an appropriate civic direction," he said.

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Holladay Drive project slow to materialize

City in hurry to get project out to bid

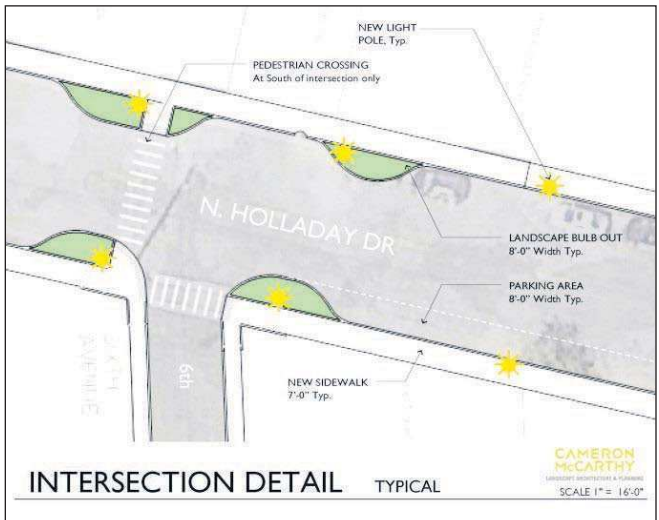
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The North Holladay Drive reconstruction project is stalling, but the city of Seaside still hopes to have the bulk of the work completed by June 2016. City Manager Mark Winstanley told the Improvement Commission the city is "struggling to stay on schedule" with the project during a meeting Oct. 7, but intends to get work begun in January and finished by June.

The city originally expected the project to go out for bid in late August or early September but design plans have not been finalized. When that happens, the project will be advertised and go out to bid immediately, Winstanley said.

"It's going to be tight," he said. "From the time you guys approve the bid, we're going to be rushing to get this done."

The city plans to reconstruct North Holladay Drive from Second Avenue to 12th Avenue. Originally, the plan was to put the project to bid as two parts,



to ensure the city at least could do Sixth Avenue to 12th Avenue and the whole street if money allowed.

However, Winstanley said the city is tackling the entire project from the start, because it will be funded by Seaside Urban Renewal funds. The Seaside Urban Renewal District reached its sunset in June and the city has until June 30, 2016, to spend the remaining funds to complete district projects.

Also, from a practical standpoint, Winstanley said, city staff knows the road must be open again by June 1.

"With the summer season starting, we know we can't have North Holladay Drive closed," he said.

The total reconstruction will include replacing all water and sewer lines under the road, installing a new drainage system, laying new pavement and sidewalks and placing new electrical lines and lighting for the road.

The project is still in the design phase, according to City Engineer Geoffrey Liljenwall.

Pacific Power & Light submitted its electrical plan in late September. The city still is waiting for CenturyLink and Charter Communications to finish their plans. Then Liljenwall will finish the design, along with Cameron McCarthy, a landscape architecture and planning company, which is crafting the streetscape

design and improvements. Water, sewer and storm are Seaside's public utilities.

Liljenwall attributed the delay to the scope of the project, which is being designed in-house, and the fact the city "only has so many resources."

Liljenwall hopes to get the project out to bid by the middle of November. From there, he said, it would be an approximately "six-week process from putting the bid on the street to getting it signed by everyone." The project should begin by January 2016.

The city alerted business and homeowners on North Holladay Drive about the project and will continue communication throughout the project to keep them updated on the timeline, Winstanley said.

Various blocks in the work site will be inaccessible at different times. People who live and work in the area may have to park elsewhere and walk to their destination at times.

"There's just no way around that kind of thing," Winstanley said.

The cost of the project is unknown until the city has put it out to bid, although Winstanley has estimated it will cost about \$300,000 per block.

Seaside Lodgings buys, plans to merge two hotels

Seaside Lodgings LLC, a grouping of independent hotels has acquired two new hotels in Seaside, Coast River Inn & River View Inn. Since the acquisition in August, both properties have been merged to create one hotel operating under the name of Coast River Inn.

The 42-room hotel is located on Holladay Drive, a few blocks from the downtown area.

The hotel is currently under renovations, including a major exterior facelift which is expected to be completed January 2016.

The interior renovation was soon completed after taking ownership. Coast River Inn's mission is to offer a spacious modern boutique hotel catering to guests in the mid-scale level. Seaside Lodgings is a hospitality company primarily engaged in the management and

ownership of upscale, mid-scale and economy hotels. Established in 2009, the company currently owns and manages four properties all located in Seaside. The acquisition of Coast River Inn marks the fourth independent hotel under Seaside Lodgings portfolio.