

# Traffic: Future work could include narrowing highway to three lanes

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In March 2020, Kenneth Shonkwiler, ODOT's senior northwest region planner, appeared before the City Council to discuss plan priorities and 75 potential projects. The work could include narrowing the highway from four lanes to three, sidewalks, bike lanes, better, more visible crossings and fixes for flooding and stormwater drainage issues.

Facility plans are more detailed than transportation system plans, and this particular project is solely focused on Highway 101 in Gearhart, Shonkwiler said.

"The facility plan will use goals and project ideas from the city of Gearhart TSP 2017 to develop more detailed projects that have ODOT and community support," he said. "The end product will provide ODOT and the city with adequate information to pursue infra-



R.J. Marx

Cars often exceed 20 mph over the speed limit along this stretch.

structure projects." Mayor Paulina Cockrum said the plan serves as a "jumping-off point." "That document outlines increasing issues with speeding, traffic accidents,

left-turn lanes, and the ability for people particularly on the east side of the highway to cross the highway anywhere except Pacific Way — and even Pacific Way is suboptimal in terms

of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards," she said. "Those are some of the many reasons it was such a pertinent part of the transportation plan." The Department of

Transportation is entering the "feedback on draft goals and objectives," before

delivery of a draft and final facility plan in winter 2022.

"This will make a difference in the final plan, how much people are in agreement with what they put out as a proposal, such as reducing the speed on 101, or reducing to three lanes with a center turn lane," Cockrum said.

As for funding, Shonkwiler said, the project is a planning-level project, which means there is not construction funding at this time. But by the end, the state and the city will have a better understanding of infrastructure needs and relative cost. This plan then assists in pursuing state or federally funded programs for construction.

"We really just began the project and will have a better idea once we start developing solutions," he said.

# Land needs: More affordable rentals are needed

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city asked us to take a closer look at the buildable lands inventory and come up with an estimate what your supply of land for residential development looks like to get a better understanding of what properties are constrained and how does that affect capacity."

The discrepancy in numbers between the 2019 county study and this year's study comes from a closer look at specific properties being developed, areas constrained by the tsunami inundation zone, dune zone and conservation easements.

The city has some provisions in code that require use of an adjacent lot by the same owner to be reserved for septic use, rather than for a second house, Hastie added. "We had not factored that into the earlier analy-

sis but did factor it into the updated analysis," he said.

About 60% of housing units are classified as vacant and the majority of them are owned and used as second or vacation homes. More typical vacancy rates for communities in Oregon are closer to 5%.

According to the study, there is a need for more rental supply for lower and moderately priced rental units. Almost 90% of the city's 1,840 housing units are described as single-family detached. Rentals make up about 16% of those units.

The greatest need for rental units is found at the lowest and middle price points, the study found. To improve supply, land could be rezoned for that purpose, or the land could be an outright use in the medium-density zone, Hastie said.

The city could promote

accessory dwelling units, encourage cottage cluster housing and streamline off-street parking requirements to increase the availability of on-street parking in different neighborhoods.

The city's zoning code needs an update to show that the housing is allowed, on what size lots and what density. "We've provided some of those amendments," Hastie said.

The report identifies comprehensive plan policies that could be changed or updated to determine if they are best practices for cities.

"One would be to expand the range of housing types that you need to be consistent with what the earlier housing study said," Hastie said. "Two, would be to have a more explicit policy to talk about support for development for housing available for low and mod-

erate incomes."

While larger cities are required to update the study every six years, Hastie recommended Gearhart review the study every five years, as a matter of course, as well as Portland State University's population updates.

"Portland State University is regularly updating their projections," he said. "They do annual population estimates for cities, and when the census comes out, they go back and recalibrate all their estimates to be consistent with the estimates.

"If you think the trends were identified previously or off base, I'd encourage you to participate in that process," Hastie said. "You ought to take a look at that and see how that supply looks like.

"It is pretty wonky stuff, even for planners like myself," he added.

# Parking: Goal is to provide more workforce housing

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to require a minimum of two off-street spaces.

"Our long-range goal is providing for more workforce housing or more residential housing," Mayor Jay Barber said.

A similar proposal went before the City Council a year ago, but the ordinance came with additional provisions eliminating the parking requirement for certain types of residential units within the downtown core. Business owners at the time said the changes could add to already existing parking shortages and would not guarantee affordable housing.

Last March, the council remanded the ordinance to the Planning Commission, which removed portions of the amendment relating to downtown commercial zones.

"This will give the council an opportunity to move forward with that part of the text amendment that appeared to be supported by the council during the initial review," Cupples said. "The requested amendment will help reduce some of the regulatory hurdles associated with developing workforce rental housing and promote more efficient use of land within the city."

Seaside's two-space off-street requirement has a "significant impact on the amount of backup land necessary to develop smaller apartments or multifamily dwellings, which in turn drives up the land cost to develop smaller rental housing," Cupples said. "You may find some of the builders who want to stick with that, but it gives them a lot more flexibility in what they can do."

The proposed amend-

ment will only affect apartments, not condominiums.

"Even if you had a studio condominium unit, it would still stick with the two-(space) requirement based on the way the ordinance is written," Cupples said.

"You're going to see more compressed parking in those areas where it's in higher demand, but if you want to get the most out of your higher density zones, this is one way to do it," he said.

Vacation rentals operate under a separate set of parking ordinances, "which are a different animal," Cupples added.

Accessory dwelling units are exempt.

Following the first reading by title only, the ordinance will be scheduled for a public hearing and second reading during the City Council meeting on Monday. A third reading and final adoption could come at the city's April 12 meeting.

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