

CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT



To: City Council
From: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
cc: Planning Commission

Date: Feb. 24, 2025

This report does not indicate all *current planning* activities over the past report period. These are tasks, processing and administration of the Development Code which are a weekly if not daily responsibility. The Planning Commission agenda, available on the City's website, is a good indicator of *current planning* activities. The number of building permits issued is another good indicator as many require Development Code review prior to Building Official review.

Anticipating a new format and monthly reports from all departments in the near future as requested by the council, this is likely the last monthly report using this format. The new format is not too different but expect a new look.

ASSOCIATE PLANNER/PROJECT MANAGER—*In addition to routine tasks, the Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager has been working on: See attached.*

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—PREAPPLICATIONS MEETINGS

Had a preliminary Q&A meeting for potential development for property at/near the intersection of US30 and Millard Road. I talked with a realtor and property owner previously over the last several months, but this is the first time to converse with the potential business.

Had a post pre-app meeting for the city's Millard Road property. The original pre-application with the City Council's chosen developer was on July 31, 2024. The developer has more recently teamed with Stantec (<https://www.stantec.com/en>) to help with the subdivision design. Staff discussed some of the details with Stantec on Feb. 6, 2025.

Had a preliminary Q&A meeting for potential expansion of the St. Helens High School athletic fields onto recently school district purchased property on the west side of the High School site. Also discussed a vacant property donated to the School District on the opposite side of Gable Roaf from the High School next to Avamere.

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.

This year's RARE participant for the city (and county) has started to work on code amendments related to their primary goal: TMDL. This is an aspect that will draw the planning department in to help probably over the next several months.

Interviews for Community Development Administrative Assistant (the person who acts as Planning Secretary amongst other functions) took place this month. Many good candidates; hopeful we will find a star.

Conducted final inspection for a pair of duplexes on the 400 block of N. 13th Street.

Building and Planning staff have been looking into our e-permitting data more closely lately. Back in 2021 city staff worked with the city's IT consultant More Power Technology Group to set up a quarterly update of the City Address, Property, Owner (APO) data for the e-permitting software. More Power did not follow through with updates and the last one was in August of 2021. This was only the second update. I have the e-communication that supports More Power's failure. However, in meeting with County Assessor staff (the cartography folks) we are suspicious that this city provided data was even used; it is still a mystery why permits are being issued outside of city limits. City provided data are only those lots within the city and permits being issued outside of the city boundary has been an issue since the beginning. It's possible that we can do an IGA with the County and they provide the data to the state. The County already does this for county areas and is in the early stages of an IGA for another city in the County. This will make things more efficient and centralize the troubleshooting. Perhaps by the end of the year we will have an IGA in place?

Recommended approval of OLCC Special Event License for O'Nammy's St. Patrick's Day Event (343 S. Columbia River Hwy). They want to use a fenced parking lot area for the event for a few days.

DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT

Prepared violation summary memo for Code Enforcement for 184 S. 15th Street to cite for multiple Development Code violations. Staff has notified the owner of several concerns in January with no action. The owner has removed stop work orders posted by the Building Official at least twice.

PLANNING COMMISSION (& *acting* HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)

February 11, 2025 meeting (outcome): Commission denied variances that if approved, would potentially enable the application to partition an undersized parcel.

The Commission selected its Chair and Vice Chair and interviewed three potential Planning Commission applicants. They reviewed the end of year report for 2024 (number of land use permits, generally) and discussed meeting times for the joint Commission / City Council meetings (with no solid conclusion).

As the Historic Landmarks Commission, they reviewed architectural changes to 161 St. Helens Street which is within the Riverfront District.

March 11, 2025 meeting (upcoming): The Commission will conduct two public hearings. One for adoption of the Economic Opportunities Analysis and the other for the Council's remand of the "triplex variances" for the property on the corner of Wyeth and N. 5th Streets.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

Quarter GIS data updates this month. This month is the first time doing this using the new GIS software GIS pro. This process has been updated a few times. My original how to notes for this effort goes back to 2007. In 2013 this was updated I think for clarity (but its been awhile...). There was a significant update around 2020 (or maybe a bit earlier) when the amount of data that came from the county increased (i.e., more to shift through to see what is necessary to create our data from the county's). Now it is for new software.

COUNCIL ACTIONS RELATED TO LAND USE

After the Feb. 5th joint meeting with the Commission, the Council—at their regular session—directed staff to pursue the 1771 Columbia Boulevard site for the new police station. I contacted the property owner about this and inquired about a needed zone change; property owner is ok with it.

Ordinance No. 3307 has been passed by the council via its second reading. This replaced Ordinance No. 3306 for Development Code amendments predominantly worked on last year. The difference between these ordinances is 3307 omitted any changes to manufactured or prefabricated housing and those allowing detached multifamily development, but everything stayed and was passed.

Council appointed a new Planning Commissioner to fill a recent vacancy. So once again, we have a full team.

From: [Jennifer Dimsho](#)
To: [Jacob Graichen](#)
Subject: February Planning Department Report
Date: Friday, February 21, 2025 3:03:24 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Here are my additions to the February Planning Department Report.

GRANTS

1. **Riverwalk Project (OPRD Grants x2)** – Masonry work on cantilever is nearly done. Landscaping is about 75% done. Concrete pours have continued with only a few more pours remaining. Construction timeline looks on track for completion. Contract is approximately 85% expended. Submitted & received our first LWCF grant disbursement of approximately 750k and our first and LGGP reimbursement request for 304,650. Coordinated with Communications on E-newsletter content and timing of drone footage. Reviewing/tracking submittals and RFIs. Attending bi-weekly check-ins with contractor and design team.
2. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project** – \$2.5 million grant award to fund design/engineering/permitting for 3 sanitary sewer basins identified as deficient in the adopted Wastewater Master Plan. Reviewed 60% design package. Approximately 54% expended of the grant. Received our 3rd disbursement request.
3. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program** – 60k funding a new Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA). Prepared staff report and noticing requirements for adoption public hearings in March for PC and April for CC.
4. **ODOT Community Paths Program: St. Helens Scappoose Trail Refinement Project** – 405k to study a trail route refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. RFP closed on 1/9 for consultants to submit proposals! Scored and reviewed proposals on the selection committee with a selection meeting scheduled for early February. This project is likely to kickoff in March/April!
5. **2024 Travel Oregon Grant Program: Riverwalk Project** - 100k grant for Riverwalk Project. Anticipated to receive remaining 50k when project is complete by April 2025.
6. **ODOT TGM Program: Transportation Systems Plan** – Have not heard an update in some time, consultant selection hopefully to be in March.

PROJECTS & MISC

7. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Low-interest loan for Streets & Utilities Project and Riverwalk improvements. Loan amendment coordinated and approved by Council on 11/20. Submitted final Disbursement Request #5, putting us at 100% expended for the loan. Remaining budget to come from budgeted URA funding. Working with finance to ensure remaining expenses are documented correctly and that we remain within approved budget. Working with state loan officer on a loan amendment

that would extend our timeline to match the June 30, 2025 anticipated completion date for the Streets & Utilities Project and to document the City's additional cash contributions which cover expenses not covered by the loan. Reviewed regular Waterfront E-newsletter content regarding construction updates, closures, progress, etc. Follow the [City's Waterfront E-newsletter](#) for timely updates.

- 8. Community Development Administrative Assistant** – Covering all Planning Department secretarial duties which includes file creation, notice mailings, planning commission packets/minutes, 2024 annual reporting, and creating all new 2025 planning file tracking systems. Deadline for applicants for this position was 1/24. Still hoping hiring will occur in February, but it is likely to be early March.

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