

QUARTERLY REPORT TO COUNCIL



Meeting Date: October 1, 2025
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Department: Planning
Division: Community Development
Reporting Period: July to September 2025
CC: City Administrator John Walsh / Planning Commission

1. General Operations

- This is the first report since a planning department staff with two planners for more than the last 10 years, has only been one. Customer service is suffering and my goal is keeping up (which is challenging), not getting ahead.
- **July:** Given the second reading for Ordinance No. 3311 for annexation of property at 35262 Fir Street, I made suggested revisions to a possible 5th amendment to a sewer use agreement originally created in 2000. The agreement is about when normal sewer is available, the STEP system used now, goes away. Since then, the agreement has been completed.
- **July:** Annual Housing Unit Population Survey (AHUPS) information provided to PSU. PSU collects housing unit and population information for Oregon's annual population estimates.
- **July – September:** CCMH post land use entitlement permit/plan review continues from the last quarterly report. Public improvement plans (e.g., Gable Road improvements) not 100% approved yet, but everything else is.
- **August:** Annual Housing Production Survey information provided to PSU. This is based on the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis (OHNA) framework to analyze housing production.
- **September:** PCC OMIC in Scappoose has a Columbia Works Internship program geared towards Columbia County high school students as (interns), giving them basic training and experience in advanced manufacturing. In the process of their learning, the interns have crafted metal art signs (historical markers) that depict parts of Columbia County, two of in interns created ones for St. Helens. I provided some guidance regarding location, sign code and such. Here is what they look like:



- **September:** Final inspection for High School remodel occurred this month. It's done! Glad to put this file away after 4 years or so (land use permit is from 2021).

Right: St. Helens High School in June 2021 on the eve of the remodel project. **Below:** September 2025, the project is near complete.



- **September:** Conducted final inspection for Infill lot along N 12th Street divided in 2024, for two attached dwellings. Noteworthy because I have good before/after photos of another example of infill development.



- **Notable administrative Planning Department permitting:**
 - **July:** Processed parklet application for the 300 block of Strand Street. This is significant as this is the first one outside of the COVID-19 era. We ended up denying it as no applicable city department supported it.
 - **August:** Issued land use decision for new gas station / convenience store just north of Les Schwab Tires along US30. First new gas station in St. Helens in a long time; easily more than 20 years.
- **Pre-application / early assistance meetings:**
 - **August:** Conducted a pre-application meeting to reboot an expired project at 200 Running Dogs Lane. A building was built per prior approvals, though contrary to approved plans. And then permits expired. Thus, re-application is necessary to finish the project.
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled monthly meeting on July 8, 2025.** Outcome:
 - The Commission discussed attendance policy, mainly per Chapter 2.08 SHMC, and based on some suggestions from the discussion, they are anticipated to continue the discussion at a later meeting.
 - The Commission discussed architectural standards, noting frustration with last year's Oregon Government Ethics Rulings and its impact on sub-committees.
 - The Commission with guests from the St. Helens Main Street Alliance, discussed vacant and underutilized storefronts.
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled monthly meeting on August 12, 2025.** Outcome:
 - Held a public hearing for an Annexation along Kavanagh Street. Recommended approval to the Council.
 - Held a public hearing for a Conditional Use Permit for new sanitary sewer trunk lines through private property between Sykes Road and Gable Road. Approved.
 - Conducted architectural review for minor change to courthouse annex. Recommended approval to staff.
 - The Commission continued their discussion about attendance policy; they agreed to continue the discussion at the October meeting.
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled monthly meeting on September 9, 2025.** Outcome:
 - Held a public hearing for a 66-lot Planned Development Subdivision north of Deer Island Road. Approved.
- **Planning Commission had their normally scheduled quarterly joint meeting with the City Council on September 10, 2025.** Outcome:
 - Discussion of allowance of side-by-side type ATVs on city streets.

- Because the Council has joint meetings with other committees/commissions now, minutes are being approved at the joint meetings.
- There was a discussion about having less Planning Commission/City Council joint meetings (e.g., bi-annually, instead of quarterly). Planning Commission will probably talk about this more at their normal October meeting.
- **Development Code Enforcement.**
 - **Sept:** Referred a RV/tiny home living complaint along S. 21st /22nd to code enforcement.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS).**
 - **July – September:** Efforts related to new mapping interface for widespread employee and public use, which took over in August. This included:
 - Provide updated data to be used.
 - Get temporary passwords and send message to other city users (e.g., Building, Public Works, Parks, and Library) to help with initial feedback.
 - Review updates, provide feedback to GIS provider, and repeat this several times.
 - After some refinement to the interface add additional users in August.

Here is the link to the new interface → <https://sh.metroplanning.com/>

- **July & September:** Data updates related to approved annexations (three properties).
- **August:** Quarterly data updates.

2. Staffing & Personnel

- **July:** Annual Cyber Security / Phishing Prevention training via CIS.
- **September:** Annual open enrollment orientation for health insurance, etc.

3. Projects & Initiatives

A. Ongoing Key Projects

- **Parks Commission's Woodland Reserve.** Staff technical support for the SHIBP Woodland Reserve concept. [No update this quarter.](#)
- **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. Consultants selected in early 2025, ODOT in contract negotiations since March. Planning to meet with ODOT to hand this project off to Alex Bird in Engineering. [Engineering with take this over but planning will continue to support the effort.](#)

August: Notified about S\some job shifting given ODOT budget and layoffs. But it looks like there will be an orientation for new grantees with a new ODOT project leader in October.

September: The kickoff meeting for this project is slated for October.

- **ODOT TGM Program: Transportation Systems Plan** – TBD \$\$ for new Transportation Systems plan. City Engineering is lead, with Planning providing support. [No update this quarter.](#)
- **New Water Reservoir** – City Engineering is lead, with Planning providing support. [August:](#) Biweekly meetings start. Initial effort is narrowing down potential sites. [September:](#) Met with consultant team to discuss land use matters for potential site list.
- **Utility Master Plan Development Code Amendments** – [No update this quarter.](#)
- **SHIBP Project Arcadia** – [July – September:](#) My role is technical support to the City Administrator on this matter. Worked with consultant to create multiple exhibits to support the transaction of selling the mill portion of the SHIBP. Some where basic needs of the transaction and others where special request exhibits from the Arcadia folks. There was mad dash to have everything done at the end of August and all essential documents where ready to sign, but the Arcadia folks ended up delaying. Now, it may not be till December before the transaction occurs.

[September:](#) Assisted with option agreement effort for a potential additional purchase of 25-some acres.

- **SHIBP PGE Parcel** – [July – September:](#) Continue working with consultants on proposal for professional services for some design and survey work to carve off the mill for project Arcadia and to create a new PGE Parcel for a new sub-station. Next step is an final agreement between the city and PGE, which is necessary for state funding. Slow movement on this, this quarter due to conflicting tasks and bare bones staff; project Arcadia's effort exhausted any spare time that may have been available.
- **Housing Capacity Analysis / Housing Production Strategy** – For St. Helens, the due dates on these are:
 - **Housing Capacity Analysis (HCA): due December 31, 2028**
 - **Housing Production Strategy (HPS): due December 31, 2029**

This will be different than the previous, because it will need to go through the new Goal 10 OHNA process. Staff will probably need to look at grant opportunities around June 2026 for this to keep on schedule. [No update this quarter.](#)

- **Food cart/pod rules.** Currently, only allowed by Temporary Use, the goal is to create rules for permanent use and maybe improved temporary provisions. This issue goes back to 2015 when we made the decision to start allowing these kinds of uses via the city's Temporary Use provisions. So, this is about a decade old issue. [No progress has been made in this reporting period, other than adding examples from a few other jurisdictions to my collection of info.](#)
- **Flood code amendments related to Endangered Species Act.** In 2009 FEMA was sued based on floodplain rules violating the Endangered Species Act. In 2016 the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) issued a biological opinion that Oregon's flood plain policies jeopardizes several threatened species such as salmon. In July

2024, FEMA announced a new program of pre-implementation compliance measures (PICM) for short term measures to be effective Dec. 1, 2024, separate from the long term, estimated for completion in 2027. Basically, flood development is supposed to include impacts to fish habitat, not just the loss of human-made structures.

August: FEMA noted a draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) expected late summer 2025. The Draft EIS evaluates the potential impacts of alternatives on how the NFIP is implemented in the Oregon plan area. FEMA will consider all input received during the Draft EIS public review and comment period. Following the public review and comment period on the Draft EIS, FEMA will develop a Final EIS, identify a preferred alternative, and publish a Record of Decision to conclude the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

B. Upcoming Projects

- None.

4. Upcoming Events & Important Dates

- No noteworthy events, special meetings or significant deadlines to mention.
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Attachments

- No attachments for this report.