

# CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT



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

**Date:** Jan. 30, 2024

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.

**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**

Potential new buyer of the old food bank building on Milton Way is serious about it for their needs but inquired with us during their due diligence period. Not a pre-app per se, but somewhat comparable time spent to help and zoning, use and permitting questions.

Also has an inquiry meeting about a potential new condominium project close to the Riverfront District.

## **PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.**

Conducted public improvements inspection for the Broadleaf Arbor apartments (i.e., new apartment complex on Gable Road) with Engineering and Public Works staff in the early part of the month. Public improvements for the site include two storm water mains within the site and the Gable Road improvements.

Conducted last Planning Department inspections towards the end of the month for the Broadleaf Arbor apartments, as they look to occupy the last building (Building A, the site's biggest and most visible along Gable Road). Aside from processing a sign permit, this ends the permitting effort as it pertains to the Planning Department, which started 2019. Moreover, when I first started with the city in 2007, my predecessor noted this was property to watch and I think there was a recent pre-application meeting or something from that era. In any case, since 2007, there was no serious interest for the property (as far as I know) until Community Development Partners discovered it for the apartment project, now nearly complete.

In December, we had what I thought was going to be a routine renewal of a temporary use permit for a food cart pod, which doesn't take much time. Upon initial inspection, staff observed a wood-framed structure that requires building permitting and was not included on the original Temporary Use Permit. Investigating that led to discovery of unpermitted "connections" of the food service units to the sanitary system with wastewater on the ground around the clean outs the hoses were "connected" to. Such connections require plumbing permits and grease interceptor considerations. This resulted in examining the subject property more closely than past renewals and several other compliance problems observed. It also resulted in staff observing the other sites with food trucks and the "connection" to the sanitary system is a problem for all areas,

though, the subject property is the only one with wastewater spillage and has the highest number of food service units. So, this turned into a much bigger issue.

Budget efforts for FY '25 continue. Estimated year end FY '24 and FY '25 estimates provided to Finance.

Deadline for Planning Commission request for applications for a vacancy and probably 2<sup>nd</sup> vacancy ended this month. We received a couple applications, and the Planning Commission interview committee will meet with, hopefully, a recommendation to the Planning Commission at their February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Appointment of selected member(s) at the February 21<sup>st</sup> Council regular session is anticipated.

Portland State University's Population Research Center has released its latest certified population [estimates](#). Based on this, St. Helens has breached 15K and the percentage of growth was 3.5%, which is a big % compared to the last several years.

	July 1, '22	July 1, '23	% increase
St. Helens city	14,506	15,009	3.5%

Conducted what should be the last inspection of the new Burger King site this month and everything is done for Planning Dept. purposes. Engineering is ok too. Still some loose ends with the Building Department.

Continue to work on this year's batch of Development Code amendments. With increased development and zoning inquiries now that January is nearly behind us, it seems the time available for this is waning.

## **DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT**

CRPUD has a drilling contractor doing work in the Grey Cliffs area in the north side of town who has been parking their trucks on private property. A neighbor started to complain last month, which ultimately led to the property owner (who lives out of state) informing the city and CRPUD that they did not grant permission for this. This was a potential zoning conflict but has been resolved.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION (& acting HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)**

January 9, 2024 meeting (outcome): The Commission review the annual year end summary, selected the chair and vice chair for 2024, and discussed some of the Development Code amendments proposed by staff. There was also some notable discussion about forming an ad hoc committee for the vacant storefront issue, which was discussed at the last City Council/Planning Commission joint meeting.

February 13, 2024 meeting (upcoming): The Commission will have a public hearing for a Variance related to window and walking path placement for a proposed development under construction along Columbia Boulevard in the Houlton area. Staff also plans to vet

Development Code amendments again, continuing from last month. The Commission will probably discuss the recommendations of the Planning Commission Interview Committee.

*As the Historic Landmarks Commission*, they will probably have an item related to Columbia County's John Gumm school renovation project for county offices.

**From:** [Jennifer Dimsho](#)  
**To:** [Jacob Graichen](#)  
**Subject:** January Planning Department Report  
**Date:** Monday, January 22, 2024 9:06:40 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Here are my additions to the January Planning Department Report.

## GRANTS

1. **Safe Routes to School - Columbia Blvd. Sidewalk & County Culvert Project** – Site walkthrough held with ODOT and final walkthrough with TFT. Submitted final reimbursement request/project closeout form to ODOT. Received project closeout approval and final reimbursement is on the way!
2. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Low-interest loan for Streets & Utilities Project and Riverwalk improvements. Working with finance and URA revenue projection consultant to support additional funding for undergrounding work. Provided updates to loan officer.
3. **Riverwalk Project (OPRD Grants x2)** – Project bidding closed on 9/19. All bids came back around \$5 million, which is higher than we had budgeted and estimated. Working on value engineering efforts to reduce project costs rebid the project and to ensure full utilization of grant funding. Presented reduced/revise site plan to Parks & Trails Commission, Council, and Planning Commission. Planning to bid the project in February. Final CDs will be received on 2/2.
4. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** – \$2.5 million grant award to fund design/engineering/permitting for the City's Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project which 3 sanitary sewer basins identified as deficient in the adopted Wastewater Master Plan. Engineering working on contract with Consor. Provided 2 rounds of comments on proposed scope of work.
5. **CLG Historic Preservation Grant Program** – SHPO Certified Local Government Program. Received our contract for 17k. State approved work plan. Executed contract with property owners.
6. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program – Request successful for 60k!** Will fund a new Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA)! Worked with DLCD on finalizing our grant contract which Council authorized on 12/20. ECONW contract, scope of work, and terms of compensation on 1/24 Council agenda.
7. **SHPO Veterans Memorial Grant Program** - 33k award for an expansion at McCormick Park Veterans Memorial. Project includes 7 branch of service monuments and corresponding flags. Project is almost complete! VFW working to get the correct flag hardware. Submitted and received final reimbursement to close out grant project!
8. **ODOT Community Paths Program** - Received 300k to study a trail route refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. Award is \$300k, with a match of around 42k split between Scappoose, the County, and us. ODOT has said contracts would come in December, but still no contract. We will keep working on statement of work with ODOT and eventually invite Scappoose and the County to provide comments. Met with 2-3 consultants interested in the project.
9. **Travel Oregon Grant Program – Received 100k grant to fund ADA component of the**

**Riverwalk Project!** Thanks to Columbia Economic Team and our Regional Destination Marketing Organization for providing support.

10. **ODOT TGM Program** – Assisting Engineering Dept with Transportation Systems Plan. Statement of Work submitted to ODOT for final review and consultant solicitation. ODOT says it could be ~6-9 months before we see movement on this project.

## PROJECTS & MISC

11. **Riverfront Streets/Utilities Project** – Attending weekly check-ins. Pump station just missing generator. Bluff trail construction is moving along. Tualatin staircase/bluff trailhead under construction. Landscaping and irrigation near south water quality swale underway. Undergrounding at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street design nearly complete. Emergency procurement will begin soon.
12. **2023/2024 Code Amendments** – Working with Jacob on a large batch of code amendments, which has included research and compilation for other communities on various topics. Specifically researched land use decision durations and drafted new proposed amendments during this reporting period.
13. **Safety Committee** – My service of 1 year on the Safety Committee ends on 1/25! Handing off the City Hall/Court representative to our alternate position Jamie Edwards.

## Jenny Dimsho, AICP | Community Development Project Manager

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