

DATE: January 30, 2018
TO: Urban Renewal Advisory Committee
FROM: Steve Wheeler, Administrator
SUBJECT: URAC Thoughts to date on Proceeding with Heights Urban Renewal Projects

BACKGROUND

The Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (URAC) hosted two open houses on Heights area urban renewal in October and November, 2017. The October meeting was a refresher course on urban renewal principles including details on what is encompassed and specifically envisioned in the Heights area. The November meeting consisted of participants evaluating a variety of possible urban renewal improvements. Project possibilities were listed in three separate categories separated by estimated time and expense to construct the improvements. Preferential on-site voting of priorities was encouraged. In addition, online voting also went on for several weeks allowing people to weigh in on projects. At least 50 people participated at the October meeting and 75 at the November meeting. There was widespread interest and enthusiasm at both events.

WHERE WE ARE NOW / NEXT STEPS

The Urban Renewal Advisory Committee is currently evaluating information developed at the two public meetings, as well as the online information. URAC will be developing recommendations to present to the Hood River Urban Renewal Agency. The Agency consists of the seven elected City Council members plus two elected Commissioners drawn from the Port of Hood River. This nine member unit is the governing body overseeing the three separate districts in the City (along with the Heights there is the Waterfront District and the Columbia-Cascade District, which is downtown).

URAC will take more time to reflect on and review on the information coming forward on community desires for urban renewal projects in the Heights District. The initial review of information appears to favor some combination of projects as follows:

- A multi-faceted project, or perhaps set of smaller projects, focusing on public transportation safety (particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists), streetscape improvements (could be facades, street furniture, decorative sidewalks, etc.) and perhaps angled parking on side streets.

- Undergrounding overhead utility lines, where feasible, to remove the visual clutter now prevalent among many streets in this District. Along with aesthetic improvements, undergrounding can provide safety benefits as the lines will not be subject to problems with ice and other situations.

URAC will next meet on February 22 to further evaluate project options for urban renewal in the Heights. A large scale map will be made available to the Committee to review in some detail possibilities in the District, which ranges along the 12th and 13th street corridor from Cascade to the Brookside Eliot intersections. At the present time it appears likely the Committee will make project recommendations to the Agency this spring. After that conceptual planning and engineering will be done to develop specific scope of work and cost estimates for the recommended projects.