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Planning Department Newsletter



SUCCESSFUL PULLMAN 2020 PROGRAM COMES TO A CLOSE

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Since last September, the city has engaged in a visioning exercise entitled "Pullman 2020." This program, initiated at the direction of the City Council, provided an opportunity for community organizations and citizens to present their views on a preferred future for Pullman. The process concluded with a public hearing at the City Council meeting of April 24. The information furnished by these local groups and individuals over the past eight months is summarized below.

- Ed Schweitzer of Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories said his company will continue to expand its operations, joining other high tech firms in the area as powerful contributors to a strong economy. For the overall community, he promoted more shopping opportunities, affordable housing, free enterprise, and improved mobility both in town and from Pullman to the outside world.
- Elson S. Floyd presented Washington State University's proposed master plan. The goals of this plan include providing a framework for enrollment growth, building research-related infrastructure, developing an open space network with a strong pedestrian focus, concentrating new development in the area east of Stadium Way while enhancing the existing campus core, developing a transportation and parking strategy, and promoting sustainability.

- Amy Robbins, Community Action Center, emphasized jobs that provide a living wage, an enhanced community transit system, improved access to mental health services, and strong parks and recreation programs for youth and adults.
- Paul Sturm from the Pullman School District said his organization will continue to concentrate on its core mission of learning through student achievement, excellence in teaching, and input from community experts. He indicated it will be important in the future to build on existing local partnerships to continue to provide safe and reliable infrastructure in the city. He said the district is planning to expand Franklin Elementary School, and is reviewing options for complete renovation or replacement of the high school.



- Alice Schroeder, Pullman League of Women Voters, expressed support for a complete update of the city's Comprehensive Plan and corresponding implementation measures.

- Allison Munch-Rotolo of the College Hill Association related her organization's desire for a high density neighborhood that conveys a positive image. She said this can be done through cultivating architectural stability, implementing a street management system, enhancing pedestrian amenities, engaging in proactive code enforcement, and encouraging small-scale commercial development along Colorado and Oak Streets.
- Lisa Carloye from the Pullman Civic Trust promoted expansion of greenways along riparian corridors, development of a pathway network that links the city's four hills with the Downtown Riverwalk system, and conversion of the Pullman-Colfax rail line to a trail.
- Marie Dymkoski, Pullman Chamber of Commerce, stated that her organization's vision is to encourage individuals to live, work, and do business in Pullman.
- Paul Kimmel, Avista Utilities, commented that evolving public policies and growing demand for energy are driving the marginal cost for energy higher, which will bring about new behaviors, new technologies, and new efficiencies.
- Eileen Macoll of the Whitman County Landlord-Tenant Association promoted the provision of safe and affordable rental housing units, and noted her organization's interest in furnishing education related to all aspects of rental housing.
- Keith Metcalf, Washington State Department of Transportation, reviewed the transportation improvements that have been accomplished in this region, and commented that his department will strive to continue making such improvements within the confines of limited budgets.
- Dick Waters provided a presentation on behalf of both the Southeast Washington Economic Development Association and the Palouse Knowledge Corridor, stating that they are attempting to build partnerships to attract new business to the area.
- Scott Adams, Pullman Regional Hospital, said his organization envisions a future with a resilient community, high quality infrastructure to sustain continued growth, and planning to keep pace with the needs of the community, including health care services. He stated that possible future projects south of the existing hospital involve an assisted living facility, nursing home, and child care center.
- Jordan Graham and Nick Ramirez, representing the Associated Students of Washington State University, encouraged continuation of the productive relationship between the city and WSU students.
- Debbie Snell of the Port of Whitman County said the port will build on its existing efforts to encourage diversification of the area's economic base by actively recruiting, retaining, and enhancing business activities, and by promoting tourism.
- Chris Clark and Chud Wendle from the Whitman County Association of Realtors expressed interest in keeping the building permit process efficient and affordable, and developing more professional office space and apartment buildings to fill existing needs.
- Greg Partch of Whitman County conveyed his appreciation for the existing partnership between the area's two counties, two cities, and two universities, and stated his hope that they would build on their success for extension of trail systems, solid waste and recycling improvements, transportation enhancements, economic development, and sales tax sharing.
- Dave Gibney spoke at the public hearing to reiterate Mr. Partch's request for a sales tax sharing agreement between the city and county that would foster growth in the Pullman-Moscow corridor.
- Steve Worthman spoke at the public hearing to promote partnerships between the various jurisdictions in the region to meet our collective goals, such as the development of a fire station in the corridor near the state line.



Now that the Pullman 2020 activities are complete, planning staff will be working with the Planning Commission to make preparations for a full-scale revision to the city's 1999 Comprehensive Plan. Staff will present to the Commission the results of the Pullman 2020 program, outline the specific procedures involved in the plan update process, and begin the preliminary research. Once funding can be furnished for this undertaking, the planning department will initiate the plan revision in earnest.

COUNCIL APPROVES REZONE AT HIGH AND MCKENZIE STREETS

At its meeting of April 24, the City Council approved a zone change for a 0.47-acre area at the northeast corner of the intersection of High and McKenzie Streets. The Council's action revised the zoning for the five lots involved in the application from C2 Central Business District to R2 Low Density Multi-Family Residential. This case brought to the fore the matter of "nonconforming uses" and their effects on property owners.

The lots that were the subject of the rezone request are all developed with housing units. Three of the lots are each occupied by a single family dwelling, and the other two are each occupied by a duplex. These housing units were established some time ago when the properties were zoned residential (and some of the units may have even been established before the city adopted its first zoning code in 1940). In 1961, the city rezoned the lots in question, as well as some of the surrounding land, to C2 with the intent of expanding the downtown area, which has always been constrained for space by topography and the South Fork of the Palouse River. Of course, even with this rezone to a commercial classification, downtown expansion did not occur in this particular area.



The rezone area at High and McKenzie Streets contains three single family homes and two duplexes

Under the C2 zoning, the residences within the subject property were classified as nonconforming uses. A nonconforming use is an activity that was once allowed by applicable land use regulations, but is no longer allowed due to a change in those regulations. The zoning code includes rules that restrict the extent of change that is permitted with respect to nonconforming uses. The rationale behind these rules is that nonconforming uses should be phased out over time to promote compatibility between all activities in each zoning district.

By zoning code standards, if a residential structure in a commercial zone is damaged by more than 75 percent of its value, it cannot be rebuilt for residential purposes. Instead, it would need to be constructed in accordance with the commercial district regulations, which means, at a minimum, the ground floor of the structure would need to be reserved for a business. During the pendency of the High/McKenzie Street rezone, applicants Joe Pitzer and J. Craig Lester from the Re/Max real estate office reported that financial institutions are no longer willing to lend money to owners of nonconforming residential uses. Messrs. Pitzer and Lester noted that this issue prompted them to file the zone change request.

Now that the property involved in the subject rezone has been amended to a residential category, the financing hurdle related to these particular nonconforming uses has been removed. Whenever a prospective owner is considering the purchase of real estate, it is prudent to check with local officials as to its zoning conformity status.



Pending Land Use Proposals

Displayed below are land use applications submitted to the planning or public works department or city-generated proposals for planning provisions that require a public meeting, public notice, or site plan review in accordance with the city code.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	STATUS
College Hill Design Standards	formulate design standards for new construction	College Hill Core	staff sent draft standards to stakeholders 9/16/11; stakeholders meeting held 10/27/11; staff revising standards
City Urban Growth Area Expansion	expand urban growth area to accommodate future growth	greater Pullman area	PC recommended approval 3/23/11; CC endorsed UGA 6/28/11; staff conducting final preparations for CC adoption
Mary's Park Annexation	annex approximately 2.2 acres to city	southeast of Old Moscow Road/Johnson Avenue intersection	staff facilitating preparation of legal description for proposed annexation area
CLG Grant Application	apply for federal funds for an historic survey of about 50 properties	vicinity of NE Maple Street	HPC endorsed application 3/26/12; CC authorized submittal 4/10/12
Ghirardo/Svingen Variance (V-12-1)	construct garage with 5-foot rear and 8-foot flanking street side yard setback	825 SE High Street	staff reviewing application; possible BOA hearing on 5/21/12
Washington Trust Bank site plan (12-1)	develop 3,700-square-foot bank on 36,750-square-foot site	670 SE Bishop Boulevard	staff requested applicant to revise site plan
Bishop 405 Building site plan (12-4)	construct 7,300-square-foot three-tenant commercial building on 1.69-acre site	405 SE Bishop Boulevard	staff reviewing site plan

KEY TO ZONING DISTRICTS: R1 Single Family Residential; RT Residential Transitional; R2 Low Density Multi-Family Residential; R3 Medium Density Multi-Family Residential; R4 High Density Multi-Family Residential; C1 Neighborhood Commercial; C2 Central Business District; C3 General Commercial; I1 Light Industrial; I2 Heavy Industrial; IRP Industrial Research Park; WSU Washington State University

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS: CC: City Council; PC: Planning Commission; BOA: Board of Adjustment; DOE: State Department of Ecology; HPC: Historic Preservation Commission

NOTES: 1) If an applicant fails to act on a pending application for a period of six months, said application will be dropped from the above list. 2) Numbers in parentheses are planning staff's internal file numbers. 3) Site plan review by city staff is generally conducted for proposed construction of developments other than single family homes, duplexes, or manufactured homes; it does not apply to most construction on the WSU campus.





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