

**Hood River Urban Renewal Agency Board & Advisory Committee  
Special Meeting – Heights Urban Design & Engineering Scoring Criteria  
September 18, 2019 6:00p.m.**

Present: Chair Kate McBride, Vice Chair David Meriwether, Mark Zanmiller, Megan Saunders, Tim Counihan, Jessica Metta, Erick Haynie

Present: Chair Jack Trumbull, Vice Chair Pat McAllister, Abby Capovilla, Jody Behr, Tina Lassen, Amanda Goeke, Joshua Chandler

Staff: Urban Renewal Administrator Rachel Fuller, Finance Director/ACM Will Norris

Absent: Hoby Streich

I CALL TO ORDER – McBride opened the meeting at 6:02p.m.

II AGENDA ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS

III MEETING OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTIONS

Norris stated he wants to start the meeting with an overview, so everyone has consistent information on where they are, how they got to where they are today regarding this project. There is a lot going on, and it's good to do reminders. Norris did an overview regarding Urban Renewal in general, Urban Renewal in Hood River, the Agency, how it works and how Urban Renewal got to the Heights Urban Engineer project.

The Heights Urban Renewal District was formed in 2011, via Ordinance 1999 with an authorized borrowing limit of \$8,495,000. These funds are authorized for projects supporting the goals of Economy, District Identity, Recreation, Traffic & Transportation, Public Utilities. Housing was added as a goal in 2016. After several years of amassing tax revenues, the district is now ready to make substantial investments.

In anticipation available funding, several well attended community meetings were held in late 2017 to prioritize the projects identified in the original Hood River Heights Urban Renewal Plan. Dovetailing on the Agency hosted events were grassroots community events, including a "Walkshop" facilitated by Blue Zones, LLC and streetscape demonstration projects as part of an Open Streets event.

Last Spring, the Urban Renewal Agency initiated a competitive solicitation process to hire an urban design and engineering firm to organize all the community input to-date and produce a unified design and implementation plan. A multi-disciplinary team led by Greenworks was awarded the contract. Their proposal includes a traffic analysis, development of several design alternatives, multiple community workshops, and production of 30% engineered drawing of the final preferred design alternative.

IV PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Cornelison, Hood River, OR – The ground swell for alternative and innovative projects in the Heights is at odds within the confines of the current Urban Renewal Plan Goals for the Heights.

These new concepts are outside the scope of projects currently authorized in the 2011 plan. The Urban Renewal Agency needs to take on the idea of street improvement/changes like we've all been discussing for the last couple of years and not limit the possibilities for new thinking. Once we have a vetted design from Greenworks, it can be formally adopted as an amendment to the Heights Urban Renewal Plan. In this way, Urban Renewal can be a possible source of funding for some of the demonstration projects.

As we come up to Climate Strike Week, I want to recommend a Washington Post article from September 1, 2019 called: Could bicycles help save the planet and improve our cities? It tells the story of the early days before cars when bikes seen as excellent transportation but were gradually supplanted by cars. Some cities in Europe have turned this type of thinking around and people now favor bikes over cars. As we know, bikes are great for the planet, our health and our cities. Speeding around on two-wheels can also provide a profound sense of joy and social connection.

Heather Staten, Director of Thrive Hood River – The URA is about to begin making some big decisions on how to spend a significant amount of public money. URA will want the money to be well spent and want to do as much good as possible. The decisions will affect the amount of money that is available. If they land on a good urban design, the design can attract other sources of money to get even more done. There will be interested private developers investing in building parts of the project. The property values will also increase more quickly, providing a larger tax increment sooner. ODOT might contribute some of the transportation projects that are in their right-of-way. Thrive encourages the URA to prioritize projects that improve walkability, bike ability, transit access and place making. Walkability is a good goal in itself, but the reason you should make it a priority in the Urban Renewal spending is economic. Improvements in walk scores have shown to increase commercial property values and lease rates. It also significantly improves retail revenue per square foot. Combine that with improved bike ability and transit, the numbers are impressive. In this area where most can buy online, having a charming neighborhood district that is walkable is another reason to go shopping there. Walkability and bike ability help decrease household transportation costs and is good for people who rely on those modes of transit. Thrive hopes the URA considers big moves like returning 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Street into two-way streets and roundabouts at Belmont and May. Greenworks can analyze the benefits and drawbacks to those changes. She wanted to point to the State Street Urban Renewal project as a cautionary tale. It includes many of the projects listed in the Heights Plan. There are now benches that no one sits on and planters with dead plants. They didn't get a focus on placemaking for a more walkable or bikeable street. There are no street trees and no green infrastructure. Urban Renewal investments did not make it a more comfortable place to walk or shop. If they measure the economic impact of Urban Renewal investments, they would be minimal. She does not believe property values have increased on State Street; higher than other areas that increased in the City that didn't get the Urban Renewal investment. The Waterfront District has had a great impact in terms of economic impact; look for that same return in the Heights District. That means walkability.

Dani Correa, business owner and resident of the Heights – her business was established in Hood River's downtown business district in 2005. In the summer of 2013, she relocated her business to the Heights because she didn't want to be reliant on tourism. Her customers needed easier access and parking for their vehicles. Her customers travel from all of the Hood River valley and the Mid-Columbia Gorge region. The Heights was the perfect fit because that is where her customers were already conducting business. As a business owner in the Urban Renewal corridor she would like to take the opportunity to briefly restate the priorities that fellow business owners and clients have most often shared with her in the last six years. 1. Undergrounding utilities to mitigate loss of commerce from power outages and update utility infrastructure. 2. Design the streetscape in

continuity with downtown. Update sidewalks, curbs, add acorn top light posts and street trees. Use curb extensions to make crosswalks safer, reduce the speed to 20 mph and add lights to key intersections to alert drivers to pedestrians. 3. Retain the authenticity and affordability of the Heights, by achieving equitable development and investment that benefits existing businesses and residents.

Megan Ramey, resident of the Heights – she stated her daughter turns 10 years old tomorrow. She has been attending community meetings to testify since she was 2 months old. She has attended these meetings asking for better biking and walking, so her daughter is safe while she is walking or biking by herself or with others. She is here representing moms of this City who want to see safe passage for their children. She stated the time is now to act boldly so our children can inherit a more livable community. She has been appointed as ODOT Region 1 Active Transportation Representative for the four counties; Hood River, Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah. She is not sure how that is going to interface with URA and URAC, but she will be working as hard as she can for walking, biking and active transportation. This project is two blocks away from my home, she will be here watching. She is very excited about the scoring criteria.

Tamara Shannon, Hood River OR – Indian Creek is used by a lot of people. She asked regarding the scoring criteria workshop, please do not preclude any possibilities of widening or reconstructing that portion of 12<sup>th</sup> Street between the Armory and the Shell station to create a safe bike path and an underpass. This type of work may or may not be in the budget, but please do not preclude the option to be included in some future project when funding is available. In other words, do not do a quick fix, do it right the first time. These two things would be well used and valued by the community and its visitors.

## V GREENWORKS LED WORKSHOP

Greenworks facilitated a special workshop for the Urban Renewal Agency Board with participation from the Advisory Committee to establish initial direction of the Heights Urban Design & Engineering project. Direction and input from the Agency will be translated into design options that will go through several public workshops and be refined into a single preferred design for the Heights District.

The project is beginning with the Urban Renewal Agency Board because it is ultimately the Board that will adopt a final preferred design. The Advisory Committee will have the most “hands on” role through the bulk of the Heights Urban Design & Engineering project. This joint meeting is intended to coordinate and set a unified direction between the Board and Committee. The results of the scoring criteria meeting will be summarized by Greenworks and returned to the Urban Renewal Agency for review and confirmation before being finalized.

Urban Renewal Agency Board, Urban Renewal Advisory Committee and members of the audience participated in the exercise to collect data input. It was noted, they are not going to end up with a full set of scoring criteria to evaluate today. This is to get a sense of the room and priorities. Jason King, Greenworks thanked everyone for participating. He stated this is not the final chance to see all the results. King and his team will take all the data and turn it into a report that is interpreted in some way. It will be sent to the Urban Renewal Agency Board for review and an opportunity to provide comment. He stated they will see a similar exercise at the next public workshop; open a similar idea to a large group. The results are going to inform a lot of those decisions. It is not necessarily going to give a clear answer but the idea of when they make decisions, they can go back to the scoring to show why they selected certain items.

There will be multiple times through the process, when the group can say they disagree with decisions and want to go a different direction.

Behr stated she was under the impression that just the Urban Renewal Board and Urban Renewal Advisory Committee would be participating in tonight's exercise. Because some community members participated and influenced the results, she suggested that it would be important to discern the data. Andrew Parish, Angelo Planning confirmed that will be part of what his team will do. The input from committees and community members can be separated. Parish stated having the community participate in a similar exercise, is in the plan.

King stated at the next public meeting, they will introduce the traffic information, the scoring activity and some of the work that has been done. They will not necessarily be at the concept phase; input needs to be gathered first. The goal is to share the information with you before that meeting.

Norris stated he will present the aggregated report from this evening, at the next Agency meeting to confirm the results reflect their input.

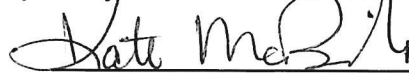
Zanmiller stated he would like to see a plan they will work on for 20 years, well beyond the initial \$8 million dollars. It's the grants they are collecting for a decade after they have used to make a significant dent. He asked that the group not scale the vision to what is in the bank today. Phasing it so they will not spend \$12 million dollars tomorrow, if they only have \$8 million. He hopes they can have a vision they can stick to for 25 years.

McBride stated they need to think about all the different aspects, as they go through this process.

Fuller stated ultimately that prioritization is what they rely on the elected officials for. She doesn't mean to put all the pressure on the elected officials, but that is the case. They need to weigh all the various plans, with what they ultimately think is most important. That is the role of the governing body. For staff, the role is to make sure they are consistent with other plans within regulations they must live in, so the Board can make informed decisions.

Behr stated something that is happening in transportation design across the County but has not been addressed is flexibility within in street scape. There are a lot of places that have parking lanes that are sometimes used for traffic lanes. She believes that should be included in the value system. There needs to be flexibility built into the plan; changes will be happening in the coming years.

VII ADJOURN – 7:30 p.m. by unanimous consent



Kate McBride, Chair

  
Jennifer Gray, City Recorder

Approved by the Agency on

12-9-19