

Planning Department Newsletter



December 30, 2011



Top Ten Planning Department News Stories for 2011

The planning department was involved in a number of different activities over the past year, from long-range processes to site-specific rezones. The most significant events associated with the department in 2011 are summarized below.

1. Urban Growth Area Hearings

For the past few years, the planning department has been guiding a proposal to expand the city's urban growth area (UGA), defined as the property, both inside and outside the city limits, into which the community expects to grow over a certain time frame. The City Council initiated this process by requesting a reevaluation of the city's UGA to help provide sufficient land for future community growth. Thinking long-term, the department devised a draft UGA that would accommodate the city's population and land use needs to the year

2060. The resulting proposal involved expansion of the existing 7,850-acre UGA by about 6,750 acres around the perimeter of the city.

This UGA plan was submitted to the Planning Commission for review at a public hearing in March. After accepting public input, the Commission made one change to the proposal (amending the land use designation along Johnson Road from commercial to residential), and recommended that the plan be approved as revised.

The City Council held two public hearings on this matter. Based on public input at its first hearing in May, the Council directed that extra land be included in the proposed UGA in the Brayton Road/Albion Road area and also along the Pullman-Moscow Highway out to Sunshine Road. This extra land increased the proposed UGA expansion to approximately 8,625

acres. The revised UGA plan was presented at the Council's second hearing in June. At that time, Council members endorsed the proposal.

In order to complete this UGA reevaluation process, staff is conducting several other tasks, including formal consultation with stakeholders associated with the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport, and preparation of UGA boundary descriptions. The planning department expects to revisit this matter with the City Council early in 2012.

2. Mader North Annexation Approved

In March, the City Council approved the Mader North Annexation, adding to the city's jurisdiction the land bordered by NW Terre View Drive on the south, Brayton Road on the west, Albion Road on the north, and the

City offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 2 for the New Year's holiday and Monday, Jan. 16 for Martin Luther King, Jr Day.

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Palouse Highway (State Route 27) on the east. This action was the culmination of a process that began in July of 2009 with the establishment of zoning classifications at the property. At 509 acres, the Mader North Annexation is the second largest annexation in the city's history (eclipsed only by the 1994 incorporation of the eastern portion of the WSU campus, which encompassed 583 acres).

The majority of the property within the Mader North Annexation area is designated for residential development. Approximately 15 acres bordering the south side of Albion Road is zoned commercial, and about 62 acres north and south of Albion Road is classified for industrial development. The Port of Whitman County owns a substantial amount of this industrial land, and it is actively pursuing a proposal to extend utility lines to the site.



since then. During that time, the committee addressed several matters pertaining to its basic functions under the program, including the adoption of bylaws for the panel.

In October, planning staff assembled a packet of information that included the Council's CLG ordinance, the HPC bylaws, and HPC member credentials. Staff then transmitted this packet to the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) for review. Soon thereafter, DAHP approved the application and forwarded the material to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. On December 20, the city received a letter from the National Park Service stating that Pullman had been formally designated as a Certified Local Government.

As a CLG, the city is now authorized to receive grant funds from the federal government and technical assistance from the state to advance its historic preservation efforts. The HPC will be exploring how best to utilize these resources as it continues its work in 2012. Congratulations are in order for all those involved in establishing Washington's newest CLG!

3. City Becomes a Certified Local Government

In December of 2010, the City Council adopted an ordinance to begin the process of establishing a Certified Local Government (CLG) historic preservation program for Pullman. This program, created by the U.S. Congress in 1980, involves federal, state, and local government interaction for the purpose of preserving historic resources in communities that choose to participate. A municipality which is interested in becoming certified to practice under this program must follow certain steps before applying to appropriate state and federal agencies for approval.

In March, Mayor Glenn Johnson selected seven community members to serve on a new Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), and the Council confirmed those appointments. The HPC held its first meeting in May, and it has met on a regular basis

4. Building Permit Valuation Rises

For the first time in four years, the total value of all building permit projects in Pullman exceeded \$30 million (as of the date of this writing, the permit valuation for the year is \$32.9 million). Major commercial proposals authorized for construction in 2011 included the Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (SEL) Solution Delivery Center on Hopkins Court, the Decagon Devices building addition on Hopkins Court, the King Drive Medical Office, an expansion of the North Pullman electrical substation on North Grand Avenue (and construction of a temporary substation across the street), expansion of the Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting Building near the airport terminal, an addition to the Starbucks coffee shop on Stadium Way, and a restaurant remodel of the former Pete's Bar & Grill establishment on

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The SEL Solution Delivery Center was one of several significant construction projects initiated in 2011.

Bishop Boulevard. Major residential developments permitted this year included the Tomason Place Apartments Phase II building on NE Terre View Drive (28 dwellings) and the Village Green Apartments project on NW Terre View Drive (also 28 dwellings). As of this late date in 2011, the city issued permits for 24 single family homes and 58 apartments this year. (To help put these figures in perspective, the average number of units permitted annually over the last 10 years in Pullman was 67 single family houses and 142 apartments.)

The increased investment seen in the community over the past twelve months is a healthy sign for the local economy. It is also noteworthy that the planning department has recently reviewed documentation for additional building proposals, including a 374-unit apartment complex on NE Terre View Drive, a restaurant and a yogurt shop planned for the former Blockbuster Video space on Stadium Way, and a tenant improvement on Bishop Boulevard for dentist Jonny Fisher. Thus, all

indications are that the community will expand upon its recent accomplishments as we enter 2012.

5. Census Data Show Substantial Growth for Pullman

The basic 2010 Census figures for Washington state were released in February of this year, and they confirmed what many long-time city residents already surmised—that Pullman experienced significant growth in population over the last ten years. The official 2010 population for Pullman was 29,799, which reflects a 20.8 percent growth rate in the number of community residents since 2000. This was our city's largest percentage increase in population over the course of a decade since the 1960s. Pullman is now the 40th largest city in Washington, and the 38th fastest growing city in the state (for those municipalities with over 10,000 people).

According to the Census data, the 2010 population of Whitman

County was 44,776. That marks a 9.9 percent increase over the county's 2000 figure of 40,740. All of these figures for Pullman and Whitman County include WSU students since the Census Bureau counts people at their place of residence on April 1.

Across the border, Moscow's 2010 Census population was 23,800, which amounted to an 11.8 percent growth rate since 2000. Latah County's population over the same time span increased by 6.6 percent.

6. Pullman 2020 Process Begins

Acting on a City Council goal adopted early in the year, staff initiated the Pullman 2020 visioning process in September. This program, modeled after a similar project implemented by the city 20 years ago, is designed to solicit community members' opinions about a preferred future for Pullman. The September kickoff event at the SEL Event Center revolved around the city's motto of HIGH Tech, HIGHER Education, HIGHEST Quality of Life, with speeches by SEL President Edmund O. Schweitzer, WSU President Elson S. Floyd, and a video produced by the Southeast Washington Economic Development Association regarding the high quality of life we enjoy in this area. At subsequent City Council meetings, representatives from the Community Action Center, the Pullman School District, and the Pullman League of Women Voters offered their perspectives on the

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future of this locality. Spokespersons from other organizations will make similar presentations at Council meetings in 2012, and the process will conclude with a public hearing.

7. Staff Prepares Draft Design Review Concepts for College Hill

One of the implementation strategies in the College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan adopted by the City Council in 2009 was to develop design standards for this part of the community to improve land use compatibility and enhance the appearance of the area. In September, planning staff produced a set of design review concepts in draft form, and distributed these ideas to a number of College Hill stakeholders. The concepts, as written, would affect the placement and design of new structures, parking areas, walkways, and open space. The draft design review standards formulated so far apply only to residential activities; related provisions for businesses and institutions (such as churches) are scheduled to be added later.

In October, the planning department hosted a meeting of stakeholders to obtain their feedback on the draft concepts. Representatives from the College Hill Association, Landlord/Tenant Association, Associated Students of Washington State University, WSU administration, and WSU Capital Planning and Development attended the meeting. Some of the comments offered at the meeting were supportive, and other

remarks were unfavorable, but all input has been helpful to staff as it refines the proposed design review standards for future review.

8. Guy Street Rezone Approved

The most significant zoning map revision of 2011 was the amendment from R1 Single Family Residential to I2 Heavy Industrial for 9.2 acres of city-owned land between Guy Street and Clifford Street on Military Hill. The city public works department applied for this zone change to provide space for relocation and expansion of city facilities in order to meet increasing demands for maintenance services, including scheduled additions to the size of the waste water treatment plant.

At the Planning Commission hearing on this topic in April, several Clifford Street residents noted issues with noise, dust, and traffic from existing city operations along Guy Street, and they expressed concern about a decrease in their property value with an expansion of these operations. The Commission added findings of fact for its resolutions to document the public input received at the meeting, and it recommended approval of the zone change as requested. The City Council held a public meeting in May to review the proposal.

During that session, the Council endorsed the reasoning behind the application and approved the rezone.



The Guy Street Rezone parcel is located across the street from existing city maintenance facilities (shown in the background).

9. Council Imposes Moratorium on Medical Marijuana Collective Gardens

Earlier this year, the state adopted a new law to attempt to clarify certain issues associated with medical marijuana following the voters' passage of Initiative 692 (the Medical Marijuana Act) in 1998. One of the elements of this 2011 legislation was a new option for marijuana production in the form of collective gardens. A collective garden can serve up to 10 qualified patients with a maximum of 45 total plants, and there is no limit on the number of collective gardens of which a qualified patient may be a member. After learning about this option, some cities expressed concern that a series of collective gardens in a community could

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have significant impacts on public health and safety. Meanwhile, at the federal level, any use of marijuana, including its use for medical purposes, remains illegal under the Controlled Substances Act.

State law allows cities to adopt and enforce zoning regulations, business licensing provisions, health and safety requirements, and business taxes related to the production, processing, and dispensing of medical marijuana. Given the complexity of this issue, and the potential harm to the community that could result due to inaction, city attorney Laura McAloon recommended to the City Council in August that it impose a moratorium on the establishment of collective gardens in Pullman to allow the city time to decide whether it would be appropriate to enact pertinent requirements. The Council agreed, imposing this moratorium for an initial period of six months.

This is a dynamic process with many different variables in play (e.g., ongoing action by state officials, and the recent filing of a lawsuit against Seattle’s medical marijuana regulations), so there is little certainty as to its ultimate outcome. The topic is scheduled to be discussed again at a Council meeting early in 2012.

10. Committee Member Resignations

Four planning committee members resigned their posts in 2011. On the Planning Commission, Patty Bergstedt departed in July, and Steve Garl and Ken Paulson decided not to renew their membership when their terms expire on December 31. On the Board of Adjustment, Mark Yrazabal also decided not to renew his membership.



The Planning Commission at work.

Steve served on the Commission for two separate periods, from 1982 to 1997, and then again from 2006 to 2011. For many of those years, he acted as chairperson for the panel. Ken and Patty spent five years and four years, respectively, on the Commission. Together, they all worked on a number of important projects, including the formulation of the College Hill Core Neighborhood Plan.

Mark began his tenure on the Board in January of 2003. Since that time, he ruled on a variety of applications, including the Whitman Senior Living Community facility at the west end of Center Street, and a size variance for the Walmart pole sign.

The planning department is very thankful for the public service performed by these individuals over the years. Their efforts have not only enhanced the community as we know it today, but they have also provided a strong foundation for Pullman’s future.

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
Certified Local Government Program	establish historic preservation program for community	Citywide	HPC approved bylaws 9/12/11; State approved CLG application 10/17/11; National Park Service approved CLG application 12/20/11
College Hill Design Standards	formulate design standards for new construction	College Hill Core	PC meeting to set direction held 9/22/10; staff sent draft standards to stakeholders 9/16/11; stakeholders meeting held 10/27/11
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
Maple Valley Apartments Maintenance Building Site Plan (11-16)	construct 805-square-foot maintenance building for existing development	2290 NE Westwood Drive	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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