

Summary of Council Discussions/Actions on Downtown Improvements

On December 14, 2015, council directed the City Manager to schedule a work session to inform the council on the downtown high-speed fiber project and improved Park Blocks and all the mechanisms for funding these projects.

On January 11, 2016, council discussed the two projects and gave feedback on the scope to inform the January 20 work session on funding mechanisms.

At the January 20 work session, council discussed a variety of funding options and requested follow-up information that staff provided at the January 27 work session.

On February 8, council provided direction to the City Manager to present to the Agency Board for its review a proposed amendment to the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan that would increase the spending limit to pay for:

- creation of a high-speed fiber network downtown,
- Park Blocks/open space improvements,
- a permanent, improved space for a possible year-round Farmers' Market, and
- redevelopment of the old LCC building at 1059 Willamette Street.

Council also requested a recommended alternative to the Downtown Urban Renewal funding option.

The Urban Renewal Agency Board reviewed a draft amendment and alternative funding option on March 14 and "moved to forward to the City, including the Planning Commission, as well as to the overlapping taxing districts, and request that the City Manager schedule a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, consistent with the draft plan and report included in Attachments H and I. In addition, individual work sessions shall be scheduled after council break on each of the four types of projects including alternative funding strategies." Those work sessions occurred on:

- April 14 on high-speed fiber,
- May 9 on Farmers' Market,
- May 9 on Park Blocks/open space, and
- May 18 on former LCC Downtown Center.

On May 23, council held a public hearing on the proposed ordinance; sixty people spoke.

On May 25, council held a work session to review comments received from the public, Planning Commission, and overlapping taxing districts. Using a matrix of estimated project levels and three boundary expansion options, council directed the City Manager to bring back the revised, proposed ordinance, Plan, and Report for action on June 13 that includes:

- the fiber project, the moderate level Farmers' Market project, the low Park Blocks/open spaces project except at \$5.2 million, the moderate Old LCC Building

project, and project delivery administration, for a total maximum indebtedness amount of \$18.7 million; and

- boundary option B, which includes the East Park Block area and a reduced portion of City Hall block, with a prohibition against using urban renewal funds for either the City Hall building or for a parking lot in the expansion area adjacent to High Street.

After hearing from the public and the overlapping taxing districts, City Council approved the ordinance amending the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan on June 13, 2016. The approved amendment:

- Makes the four specific projects listed above eligible for urban renewal funds;
- Outlines a required community engagement and public hearing process before the City Council, acting as the Agency Board, can take action to fund the projects (except high-speed fiber).
- Increases the spending limit (the amount that can be spent on the projects) to \$19.4 million;
- Expands the district boundary by five acres to incorporate the eastern Park Block area and a portion of the City Hall block; and
- Prohibits using urban renewal funds for either the City Hall building or for a parking lot in the expansion area adjacent to High Street.