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OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

ED BROOKSHIER

## Hermiston Urban Renewal Projects Forwarded to the Public

Conservative project costs estimated at \$2.5 million

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Hermiston, Ore. – A list of potential projects and programs to be funded through a downtown Hermiston Urban Renewal District is ready to go out to the public. Concepts of several of the projects have been in the works for more than five years.

Public involvement helped create Hermiston’s Downtown Plan in 2008. In addition to revising rules in the downtown area to encourage private investment, the Downtown Plan identified the creation of a downtown gathering place which could host events and draw more people into the downtown area. Additionally, the plan identified parking improvements and aesthetic improvements to downtown businesses as other ways to re-vitalize the area. Those three concepts make up the focus of projects and programs recommended by the Hermiston Urban Renewal District Planning Advisory Committee (URD-PAC).

Projects also included in the plan are a business loan program aimed at helping to cover start-up costs for businesses locating downtown and a signage program to direct people more easily to find downtown amenities like shopping, dining, and parking. The project list also includes several place-holder items, including pathway improvements, landscape beautification, and cultural attractions. The place-holder projects would allow the Urban Renewal District board the flexibility to add and expand new projects if district revenues come in higher than expected.

“I think this is a great list of projects,” said Joe Thompson, URD-PAC member.

The planning process for the Urban Renewal District has used an assumption that property values within the boundaries will rise at a rate of 1.5% annually over the next 20 years. District Planning Consultant, Jerry Johnson is confident with the estimate that the District will therefore generate at least \$2.5 million in revenue.

“This growth rate is one of the most conservative that I’ve seen used,” Johnson said at the April 25 URD-PAC meeting.

Because of the conservative revenue estimates, the Urban Renewal District Board will then have several option if growth rates exceed estimates. One option would be to retire the district early once the initial projects are paid off. Another option would be to expand upon the initial projects

if they prove to have a major positive impact. Another option would be to use the additional revenue generated to fully fund some of the place-holder projects.

Members of the URD-PAC will present the proposed project list to various clubs and service groups throughout May and June. A public open house will then be held June 13, where all members of the community can review the project list. The URD-PAC will then make a final proposal regarding an Urban Renewal District Plan in July, with City Council action expected in August.

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The City of Hermiston is a vibrant, and growing community of nearly 17,000 residents located at the cross-roads of the Pacific Northwest. Located near the intersection of Interstate 84 and Interstate 82, just minutes from a Columbia River port and the Washington state line, Hermiston is capitalizing on its strategic location as a transportation center and gateway to Oregon. To learn more about the exciting future of Eastern Oregon's largest city, go to [www.hermiston.or.us](http://www.hermiston.or.us).