



The Friday Update

Bringing you a summary of weekly news from City Hall

December 28, 2001

CITY OF COOS BAY

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THE COOS BAY PROGRESS REPORT . . .
URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY PROPERTY PURCHASES

By Coos Bay City Manager Bill Grile

We've fielded a few questions recently at City Hall about property acquisitions made by Coos Bay's Urban Renewal Agency, which is comprised of Mayor Benetti and members of the City Council. Some wonder how the Agency has managed to make these purchases, and why and how much the acquisitions cost. I'd like to provide a short answer to these questions in this column.

Why does the Agency purchase property? There are various reasons, but underlying them all is one common purpose. The Agency acquires property to implement its two urban renewal plans. The older of these covers the downtown core area and property along the Marshfield and Eastside waterfronts. The other one covers property in Empire. It is the implementation of these plans that has produced the streetscape beautification along Newmark and Bayshore and other major capital projects that have received much praise from so many in the community. Sometimes the implementation of these plans requires the acquisition of private property. Such has been the case for the library expansion, the proposed train museum development on Bayshore and the planned historic Empire waterfront redevelopment down by the boat ramp on the Empire waterfront - to give some examples. There are others.

How much property has the City purchased? Since 1995 when I became city manager, the City has purchased 8 properties and is currently "in escrow" for another four, these being those held by the South Coast Gospel Mission. Two of the acquired properties were necessary for the library expansion project, another one to allow improved access to the planned Front Street redevelopment area, one for the planned train museum across from McDonald's on Bayshore, one to create the "Sportsman Pedway" near the Egyptian Theatre, two to create the planned overlook wayside where the Bay Club once sat at Newmark and Empire Boulevard, and one to allow a planned development that will enhance the Empire waterfront. The recent purchase of the rescue mission properties are in response to a proposal from mission officials and strong public sentiments, with all interests motivated to find a better site for this important community asset. With the completion of these acquisitions, no additional ones are anticipated in order to implement both urban renewal plans.

How does the City purchase property and how much is paid? The City negotiates with property-owners and almost always after having a professional appraisal done, pays at or below appraised value. Some of the purchases have been at a price below appraised market value, one or two for a penny or two more. It's that simple. Eminent domain has not been used once since 1995 in Coos Bay.

It would be easy to criticize some or all of these purchases if you didn't

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understand urban renewal financing. Sadly, there are still a few people in the community who don't realize that Coos Bay's urban renewal program simply doesn't cause property tax increases and that none of the property purchases the Agency has made have cost local property taxpayers more as a result of these community development decisions.

Want to learn more about urban renewal financing or how Coos Bay is working hard to make our community a better place to live and work? You know where to find me!