

North End moves another step toward development

by K.C. Mehaffey | Nov. 14, 2016, 4:26 p.m.

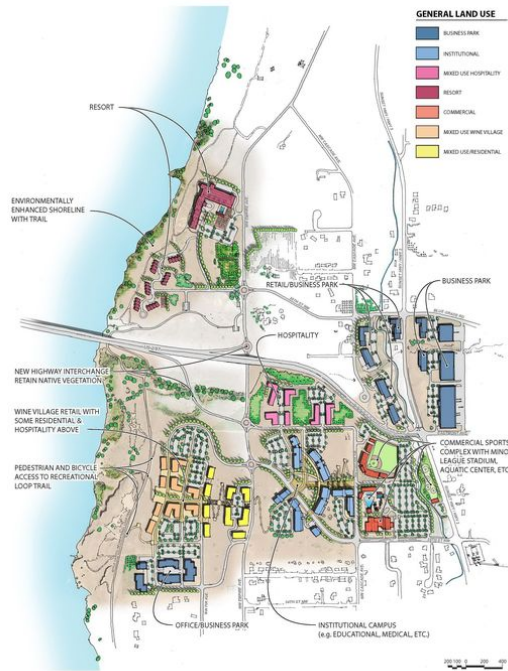


Photo provided

Image provided Douglas County and East Wenatchee elected officials have approved this site plan for development in East Wenatchee's urban growth area known as the North End. It is just an example of the development that could occur along the Columbia River both north and south of the Odabashian Bridge.



EAST WENATCHEE — More than 300 acres of prime Douglas County real estate is one step closer to development but still has more vital steps to take before the commercial and recreational property near the Odabashian Bridge sees any action.

Douglas County commissioners and East Wenatchee council members have adopted a master plan and planned action ordinance which offer a clear outline for extending infrastructure and developing 317 acres both north and south of the bridge. That vision includes some 4.6 million square feet of floor space that could be built as a resort, office buildings and wine village closest to the Columbia River, and hotels, stores, offices and a

business park on the bench above it.

Most of the property now is either vacant, planted in orchards or sparsely developed with homes. The Apple Capital Recreation Loop and Rocky Reach trails also wander through the property along the Columbia River.

The area known as the North End is in East Wenatchee's urban growth area, and zoned either general commercial or waterfront mixed use, allowing for a wide variety of possibilities.

"Private development now has a clear picture," said Lisa Parks, executive director of the Port of Douglas County, which has worked since 2012 to come up with the plan. "But it is just the first step. It isn't going to happen tomorrow. But we have charted a course now."

Still, it could be years before anything new is developed in the North End area. "The whole buildout is 10 to 15 to 20 years out. It's still a work in progress," she said.

Parks said she will be asking members of the elected officials advisory group, which has helped to guide the effort, to pitch in funds for the next step — a cost-benefit analysis, which will cost about \$15,000.

The analysis will identify how much the public will benefit if the area is developed.

Parks said generally, it's important that developers pay for the cost of their development needs.

"In this case, because it's economic development, there is some public return, and some reason why the public should invest in it," she said, pointing to new jobs and additional taxes.

The major costs before development can move forward are estimated at about \$34 million for roads, and just under \$9 million to extend water, sewer and storm water services to the area, with sewer being the majority of the cost, Parks said.

She said state Department of Transportation funds could help pay for needed road improvements, which include only half a \$33 million interchange already planned but not yet budgeted.

The site plan, which was adopted unanimously last month by county and city officials, includes conceptual uses, a capital improvement program, a funding plan and other strategies. The ordinance streamlines environmental review and permitting.

"The port district is fully embracing our role of marketing this to developers," she said, adding, "We're going to do everything we can to raise the visibility of it."

Parks said part of the property in the North End was eyed for a large shopping mall in the mid-1990s, but those plans never materialized. She said she's not sure why the efforts fell through. But, she said, "It was all part of the mall wars, and the county and city were not getting along," she said, adding that there were also challenges to the project through the Growth Management Act Hearings Board.

This plan, by contrast, took cooperation by many different jurisdictions, including the city and the county, the East Wenatchee Water District, the Douglas County Sewer District, and the Douglas County PUD.

Parks added that this kind of collaboration has provided a foundation that can be used to help develop other parts of Douglas County where numerous jurisdictions and districts complicate development efforts.

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