

MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

November 7, 2024

5:30 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon 97058
Via Zoom / Livestream via City Website

PRESIDING: Cody Cornett, Chair

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: John Grant (joined meeting at 6:05), Maria Peña, Carrie Pipinich, Mark Poppoff, Nik Portela

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Addie Case

STAFF PRESENT: Director Joshua Chandler, Secretary Paula Webb

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cornett at 5:33 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Cornett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Peña and seconded by Pipinich to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion carried 6/0; Case, Cornett, Peña, Pipinich, and Poppoff voting in favor, none opposed, Grant and Portela absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lacking a quorum, approval of the August 15, 2024 minutes was postponed to the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Clair Graper, 713 W. 18th Street, The Dalles

Ms. Graper expressed concerns about a lack of community engagement post-COVID. She noted many residents were unaware of ongoing changes, despite information being on the city website, which she described as difficult to navigate. She suggested logistical improvements to the website and advocated for a town hall to gather community input on priorities before implementing changes. Graper criticized the reliance on Main Street for involvement and called

for more active engagement from City Hall, particularly in Community Development. Additional comments are included in Attachment 1.

Chair Cornett clarified that the Planning Commission and the Urban Renewal Agency were entirely separate entities with distinct functions. While the Commission occasionally recommended urban renewal items to City Council, this was part of a legislative process rather than direct involvement. Chair Cornett suggested addressing concerns directly to the Urban Renewal Agency, as it would be better equipped to respond.

Ms. Graper expressed the belief that the Planning Department shared similar responsibilities with the Urban Renewal Agency and suggested they worked closely together, emphasizing a collaborative relationship between the two entities.

Richard Wolfe, no address provided

Mr. Wolfe asked if the Planning Department typically had a role in all urban development. He asked if concept drawings for the Federal Street plaza were received.

Chair Cornett replied the plaza was still in planning; no drawings were received.

Mr. Wolfe asked if the Commission would approve funding tonight for Federal Street.

Chair Cornett replied the Planning Commission would not discuss specific numbers allocated to the Federal Street project, as it all fell within the Urban Renewal budget.

Mr. Wolfe replied that the project did involve planning. He expressed concerns about the lack of a detailed concept drawing, stating that only part of a page showed any design. He questioned the approach of hiring a designer or company from another state or city to create a concept, instead of engaging locally. Mr. Wolfe also mentioned concerns about spending significant funds – citing \$1.5 million for engineering four blocks of First Street – and criticized the lack of collaboration with the Historic Landmarks Commission and the Planning Department, especially given the project's location within the Historic Landmarks business district.

He emphasized the importance of public involvement and noted that community ideas had not been fully incorporated into a design. Wolfe shared that he had personally created a concept drawing (Attachment 2) based on public feedback and believed it could compete with designs from external firms. He expressed a desire to work collaboratively with staff and unify the community around the project.

Chair Cornett replied, this Planning Commission has no involvement in planning or generating ideas for the Federal Street Plaza or any Urban Renewal Agency projects.

Director Chandler clarified, the Federal Street Plaza project will not be overseen by the Planning Commission. Additionally, the Community Development Department has had minimal involvement. The project is being managed by an ad hoc committee led by the City Manager. The Tony's site is a distinctly separate project from the Federal Street Plaza. The Planning Commission or Historic Landmarks Commission may become involved in the Tony's site if redevelopment requires oversight. However, decisions regarding the use of the Tony's site will be made by the Urban Renewal Agency.

Mr. Wolfe replied, the decision needs to be made by the City's residents. We need to be part of the decision-making process. Present it to us and let us review it.

PRESENTATION

Urban Renewal 101 – Elaine Howard Consulting LLC

Director Chandler introduced Economic Development Officer (EDO) Dan Spatz, Elaine Howard, the consultant who has assisted the Urban Renewal Agency throughout the plan update process over the past year.

Director Chandler stated Ms. Howard would provide an overview of urban renewal (Attachment 3). As noted in earlier comments, the Planning Commission is separate from the Urban Renewal Agency. However, this evening, the Commission is considering a matter related to the Urban Renewal Agency.

Elaine Howard explained that impacts in an urban renewal area generally affect the city, the school district, and the county. When you receive your tax bill, you may notice an urban renewal line item at the bottom.

The inclusion of urban renewal taxes on all tax bills involves a two-step process. Ms. Howard explained this using a hypothetical property tax bill for a property valued at \$100,000. The total tax rate for this hypothetical property is 13.1048.

In a city without an urban renewal area, if the property value increases by 3% in the next year, each taxing district receives a 3% increase, and the total property tax bill reflects this 3% rise.

In a city with an urban renewal area, the property value still increases by 3%, but the increase is allocated differently. Urban renewal collects the 3% increase, while the taxing districts continue to receive the same amount they were allocated when the property was initially included in the urban renewal area.

The tax assessor calculates these amounts for all properties within the urban renewal area, aggregates the totals, and then spreads the urban renewal funding across all property tax bills citywide. This process follows the requirements of Measures 5, 47, and 50, which set property tax limitations. After those measures went into effect, the Department of Revenue and county assessors devised this method to fund urban renewal while complying with the legal limitations.

Chair Cornett asked if the tax was applied to a property within the urban renewal district, or to any property within the city limits.

Elaine Howard explained, this example shows a property within the urban renewal area. Each property in the urban renewal area goes through this process with the assessor. Step two involves adding up all those amounts and dividing them by everyone's tax bill based on property value. Even if you are not in the urban renewal area, you will see a line item for urban renewal taxes and pay a share. If urban renewal ends, your property tax bill will not decrease. The money that was diverted from other taxing districts to urban renewal will be redirected back to those districts.

Chair Cornett asked, "When an urban renewal program begins in a city, the funds that go to the urban renewal agency are not new funds. They are simply funds that every other tax district is receiving less of?"

Elaine Howard replied, yes. Their tax revenue for the next year does not decrease from what they had the previous year. They simply do not receive as much as they would have, and this applies only to the properties within the urban renewal area."

As the rest of the city grows and new development occurs, all the taxing districts continue receiving the full amount of new property tax revenue. It's a confusing system, and it's understandable that people are confused when they receive their tax bills, but this is the process.

ACTION ITEM

Adoption of Resolution No. PC 624-24, a resolution recommending the City Council approve a substantial amendment to the Columbia Gateway/Downtown Plan and Report

Director Chandler presented the staff report. This proposed amendment would increase the Urban Renewal Agency's spending authority by \$6.1 million, a decision pending approval by the City Council. Chandler explained that the amendment is a response to the limited spending authority currently available, with only \$2.2 million uncommitted from a total of \$29 million. This increase in authority is necessary to fund projects like the First Street reconstruction.

Director Chandler stated that no new debt would be incurred with the amendment, and that the district will terminate as scheduled in 2029. Any uncommitted funds will be returned to the taxing districts at that time. The amendment process has involved consultation with local taxing districts, and it will now be reviewed by the Planning Commission for recommendation to the City Council. Director Chandler outlined the Comprehensive Plan findings that align with the proposed amendment, including goals for open space, recreation, economic development, housing, and transportation.

Ms. Howard presented the Urban Renewal Plan amendment process (Attachment 4).

Role of the Planning Commission: The primary role is to review the Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Plan amendment to ensure it aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan, and then make a recommendation to the City Council.

Blight Definition: Urban renewal funding can only address "blight" as defined by the statute – capital improvements like infrastructure and building rehabilitation. This includes street repairs, utilities, and other physical improvements. Social programs, such as those addressing houselessness, cannot be funded with urban renewal money.

Project Overview: The amendment includes expanding maximum indebtedness by \$6.1 million. This will allow for continued downtown building rehabilitation, including projects like the Basalt Commons (a mixed-use development), renovations at the Oak Hotel [Sigman's Flowers], and improvements to First Street, including sidewalks and safety infrastructure. Federal Street Plaza is another significant project, intended to create a community gathering space with matching funds from external grants.

Impact of Urban Renewal Funds: Urban renewal funds will leverage external resources, such as state and federal grants, by contributing to the required local match.

Financial Overview: The maximum indebtedness would increase by \$6.1 million, bringing the total available to \$10.9 million. This increase allows for more projects, with a focus on the incentive program, First Street reconstruction, and various downtown developments. The allocation includes expected expenditures for the Basalt Commons, First Street improvements, and Federal Street Plaza, as well as ongoing administrative costs.

The amendment is a necessary step to continue revitalizing downtown, and Ms. Howard emphasized that the amendment is consistent with both city and state requirements. The city is also working with Tiberius Solutions, a financial advisor, to ensure the plan is fiscally sound. The City Council will ultimately decide on the approval, with Planning Commission providing its review and recommendation.

Commissioner Grant joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Ms. Howard provided details about the upcoming steps in the Urban Renewal Plan amendment process:

Comprehensive Plan Review: As part of the amendment process, the Planning Commission will review how the proposed projects align with the City's Comprehensive Plan. This is critical to ensure that urban renewal funds are being used in ways that are consistent with the City's broader goals.

Public Input: A public briefing is scheduled for December 9, where the public can provide input on the plan. This meeting is open to all residents of The Dalles, and feedback will be collected as part of the decision-making process.

Staff Recommendation: The staff recommends moving forward with a resolution that adopts the amendment to the Columbia Gateway Downtown Plan and Report. The motion will include a finding that the amendment conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The December 9 meeting will be a key moment for gathering public feedback. If the Planning Commission agrees, they will recommend adoption of the amendment to the City Council.

The discussion highlighted some key points related to the ongoing costs and changes in the First Street project. Director Chandler mentioned that approximately \$1.5 million has been spent on First Street since the project began in 2006-2007. The cost is attributed to multiple phasing changes over the years, including an earlier proposal to build a tunnel under the railroad and freeway to connect the Riverfront Trail, which was eventually abandoned due to high costs. The project has faced significant cost escalations and adjustments over time, particularly as plans evolved.

Director Chandler noted the resolution includes the findings of the Plan's conformity with The Dalles Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Graper asked when the report was compiled. Ms. Howard replied the date compiled was October 10, 2024; it is very current.

It was moved by Cornett and seconded by Peña to adopt Resolution PC 624-24, a resolution recommending the City Council approve a substantial amendment to the Columbia Gateway/ Downtown Plan and Report. The motion carried 6/0; Case, Cornett, Peña, Pipinich, and Poppoff in favor, none opposed, Portela absent.

STAFF COMMENTS / PROJECT UPDATES

Director Chandler stated the November 21 Planning Commission meeting will focus on new requirements from FEMA.

Additionally, the City is working on updates to the Short Term Rental ordinance. While the Planning Commission does not handle short-term rentals directly, there will likely be some follow-up actions to clean up the Code. Short-term rentals were previously removed from Title 10 (Land Use and Development), but there are still references to bed and breakfasts in the Code that need to be formally removed. Bed and breakfasts have been replaced by the short-term rental license program, but the formal process of removing those references must still be completed. This matter will likely come before the Commission in the future.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS / QUESTIONS


None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cornett adjourned the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Submitted by/
Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department

SIGNED:


Cody Cornett, Chair

ATTEST:


Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department

Paula Webb

From: Claire Graper <starmystt@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 07, 2024 2:09 PM
To: Joshua Chandler; Paula Webb
Cc: Matthew Klebes; Richard Mays; Amie Ell; Abigail Jara
Subject: Public Comment - Planning/Urban Renewal Tonight

WARNING: Email from external source. Links and attachments could pose security risks. Investigate sender and think before you click.

I will have comments addressing the lack of community engagement in Urban Renewal projects.

1. Define blight - we do not want to become Hood River. People who want Hood River's feel, live in Hood River. The changes made downtown have not improved the look and feel of our entertainment district according to residents. They have not increased community access/use of our downtown.

2. Communities do not seem to be adequately addressed according to their communication needs, i.e. seniors, Spanish speakers, houseless and people with disabilities seem to be disadvantaged. This impacts community equity & inclusion which is widely seen as imperative for good governance. What is planned to improve intentional outreach to these communities and for the rest of us that do get the paper & check the website if Urban renewal is extended?

3. We want our historic district and once it is gone it is so gone! Community Outreach is imperative Would planning/urban renewal be willing to start a citizen advisory committee for downtown and all Urban Renewal projects moving forward with neighborhood community members?

I would like to get a report of responses to the Housing survey by survey completion date. I would very much like to see results for community surveys on the website someday, maybe under Town Halls?

Regards,
Claire Graper
503-310-6825



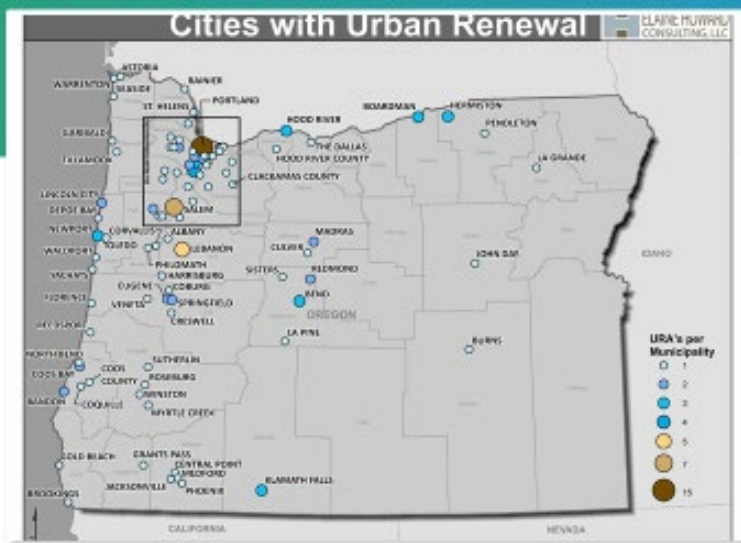
WHAT IS URBAN RENEWAL?

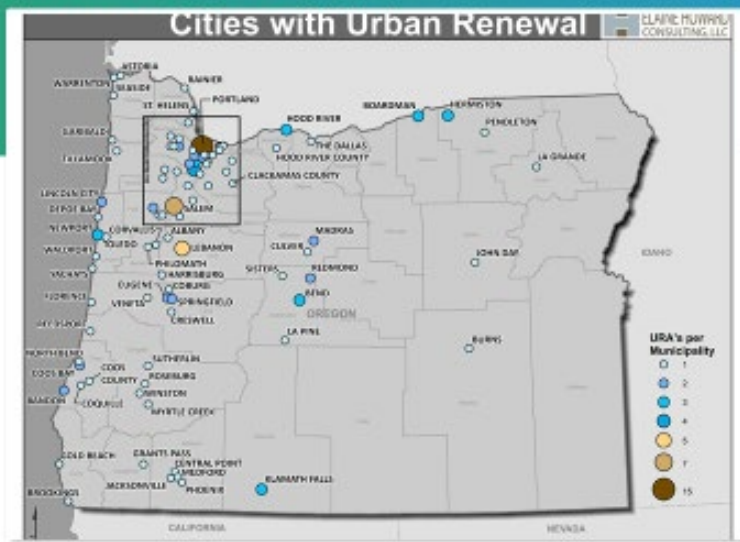


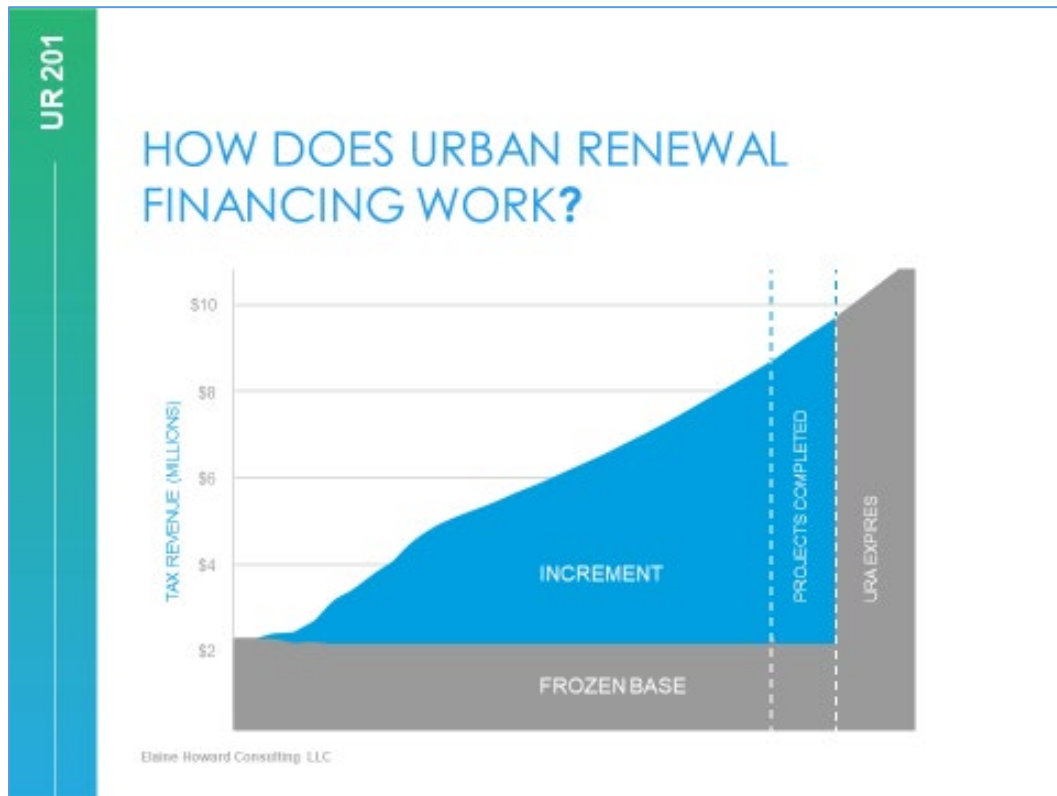
- Economic development tool
- Unique in that it is a financing tool, but also a plan with projects
- Used to address "blighting" influences in specific areas
- Functions on increases in property tax revenues in "Urban Renewal Areas"
- Used all over Oregon (Map on next slide)

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CITIES WITH URBAN RENEWAL







UR 201

IMPACTS TO TAXING DISTRICTS

- ❖ Urban Renewal does not provide new money
 - Diverts funds that would go to other property tax districts
- ❖ Continue receiving taxes on frozen base
- ❖ Temporarily forego taxes on any growth in Urban Renewal area
- ❖ Growth may not have occurred but not for urban renewal

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URBAN RENEWAL AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS



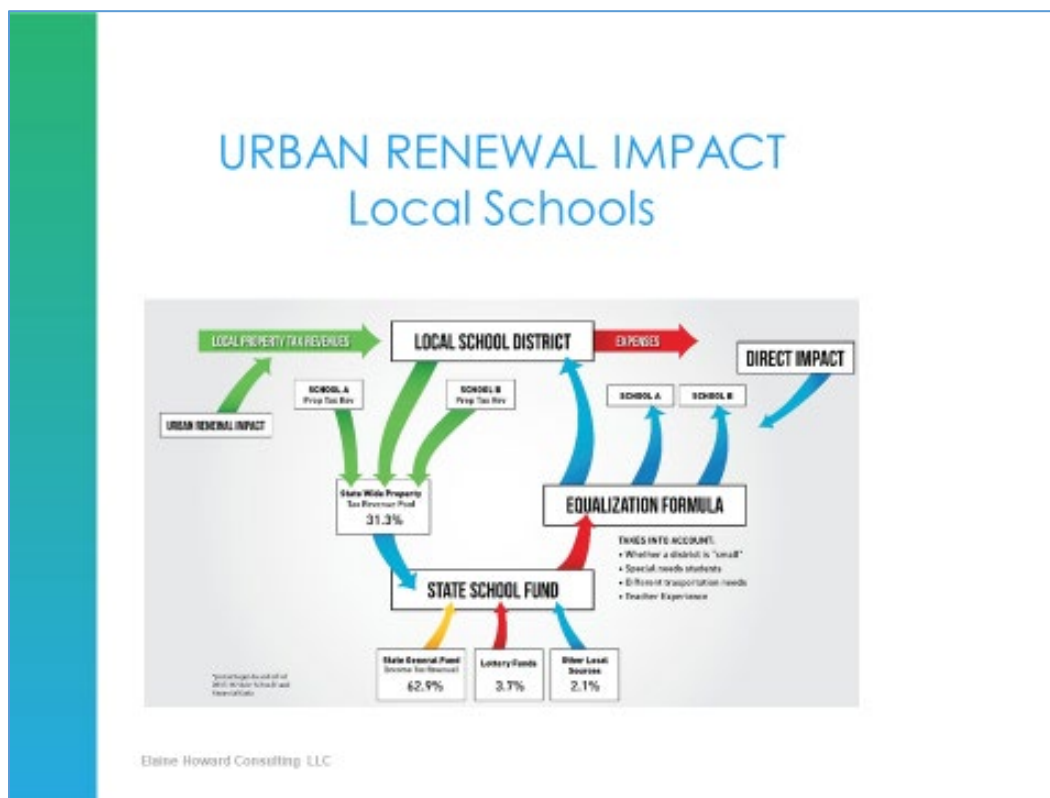
An Indirect Impact

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URBAN RENEWAL IMPACT Regular Taxing District



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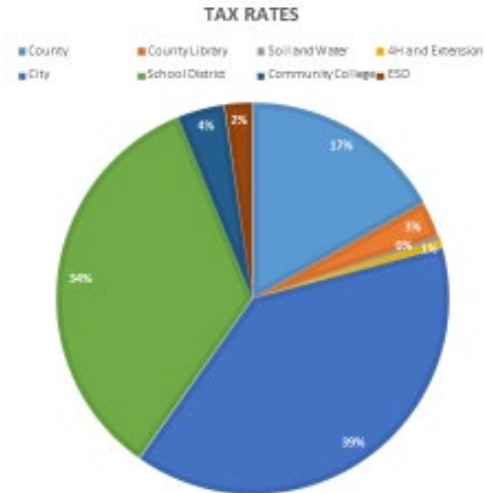


HOW DOES AN URBAN RENEWAL AREA FUNCTION?

- 1. Income Source**
 - ❖ Yearly property tax collections based on growth within Boundary (more detail on mechanism in later slide)
- 2. Expenses**
 - ❖ Projects, programs, and administration
- 3. Spending Limit**
 - ❖ Capped by Maximum Indebtedness (MI):
 - The total amount of money that can be spent over the life of the district on projects, programs, and administration.

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LEVERAGING CITY TAX RATE



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A HYPOTHETICAL PROPERTY TAX BILL

Taxing District	Rate	Property Value
Property Value		\$100,000
County	\$ 2.2052	\$220.52
County Library	\$ 0.3947	\$39.47
Soil and Water	\$ 0.0500	\$5.00
4H and Extension	\$ 0.0800	\$8.00
City	\$ 5.1067	\$510.67
School District	\$ 4.4614	\$446.14
Community College	\$ 0.5019	\$50.19
ESD	\$ 0.3049	\$30.49
Urban Renewal		
Total	\$ 13.1048	\$1,310.48

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A HYPOTHETICAL PROPERTY TAX BILL

Taxing District	Rate	Property Value	Property Value without UR
Property Value		\$100,000	\$103,000.00
County	\$ 2.2052	\$220.52	\$227.14
County Library	\$ 0.3947	\$39.47	\$40.65
Soil and Water	\$ 0.0500	\$5.00	\$5.15
4H and Extension	\$ 0.0800	\$8.00	\$8.24
City	\$ 5.1067	\$510.67	\$525.99
School District	\$ 4.4614	\$446.14	\$459.52
Community College	\$ 0.5019	\$50.19	\$51.70
ESD	\$ 0.3049	\$30.49	\$31.40
Urban Renewal			
Total	\$ 13.1048	\$1,310.48	\$1,349.79

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A HYPOTHETICAL PROPERTY TAX BILL

Taxing District	Rate	Property Value	Property Value without UR	Property Value With UR
Property Value		\$100,000	\$103,000.00	\$103,000.00
County	\$ 2.2052	\$220.52	\$227.14	\$220.52
County Library	\$ 0.3947	\$39.47	\$40.65	\$39.47
Soil and Water	\$ 0.0500	\$5.00	\$5.15	\$5.00
4H and Extension	\$ 0.0800	\$8.00	\$8.24	\$8.00
City	\$ 5.1067	\$510.67	\$525.99	\$510.67
School District	\$ 4.4614	\$446.14	\$459.52	\$446.14
Community College	\$ 0.5019	\$50.19	\$51.70	\$50.19
ESD	\$ 0.3049	\$30.49	\$31.40	\$30.49
Urban Renewal				\$39.31
Total	\$ 13.1048	\$1,310.48	\$1,349.79	\$1,349.79

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