



Mac Corthell – Planning Director

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Planning Director, Mac Corthell

Date: August 25, 2021

Re: Planning Department Staffing

Why Does Planning Need Another 0.5 FTE (Support Staff)?

Understaffed. Currently 2 Planners and 0.5 support staff to handle land use/permitting, long-term planning, code enforcement, economic development, Planning Commission meetings, and all of the accoutrements that go along with these programs. See comparisons table below for staffing of comparable sized cities.

New and Enhanced Requirements. The City of Molalla recently passed 10,000 people, this creates enhanced tracking, reporting, and planning requirements.

Growth. The City of Molalla is in the top 10 fastest growing cities in Oregon and has been for multiple years running (we are likely in the top 5 at present). Growth implicates planning because it is accompanied by increases in land use, residential/commercial/industrial building, Urban Growth Boundary considerations, front-line traffic, and inquiries. It also means more citizens and thus more code enforcement complaints and cases.

Unaddressed & Partially addressed Programs. We are currently operating with enough staff to fully handle only the land use/permitting program, all other programs and initiatives are put on the back burner and/or partially addressed as time allows.

Organizational Development. With growth trends as significant as Molalla's the organization must continue to develop in order to meet the needs of the community. Planning Staff has been forced to prioritize one program, and is unable to continue to develop the organization as needed (e.g. Planning Handbook, standard procedures, cooperative process integration, etc.).

Public Benefit. The lack of capacity to develop the organization and better engage the public results in a lack of tools that would be at the public's disposal, some cumbersome processes that could be smoothed with time to assess and address them, and minimal opportunity to engage the public around various initiatives.

Overpaying for Clerical Work. Under our current staffing levels Planners must contribute a substantial amount of work to clerical tasks that are more economically handled by support staff.

Comparisons

A request for FTE's was sent to all planners in the state, these were the most comparable respondents.

City	Population	FTE's	7 Year Growth Rate 2013-2020*
Sandy	11,070	4.5	10.8%
Newport	10,559	3.0	1.2%
Astoria	9,836	3.0	1.7%
Molalla	10,000	2.5	21.8%
Jacksonville	3,015	4.0	6.1%
Milwaukie	21,009	6.0	0.1%

- Molalla has by far the most substantial growth rate over the last 7 years but has less staff than comparable cities.
- Molalla is listed as the 8th fastest growing city in Oregon based on 2010-2019 Census data. Molalla has added an additional 10% in population since the end of the data set which likely makes it one of the top 5 fastest growing cities in Oregon.

Conclusion

The Planning Department has been able to stay above water and push the department in a positive direction despite the lack of human capacity. As the city booms, and land runs low, the volume in each Planning Program continues to increase. This increase is forcing the department to prioritize the items with the shortest legal timelines and cross our fingers that we will have the capacity to address the rest within legal timelines, or before they become an issue. We are currently staring down an Urban Growth Boundary expansion that will require substantial staff support and oversight for any consultant we bring onboard. Additionally, the planning department is leading implementation of the city's engagement platform, and managing as much development currently as the department has handled in the prior 3 years combined. The programmatic needs will only continue to grow with the population and will eventually require additional planning staff in the form of an economic development specialist, code enforcement officer, and associate planner at a minimum. For now, having a full-time support personnel in the department will allow us to continue developing the organization to meet the needs of the community and our various programs.