Economic Vitality Committee
Meeting Highlights
December 2, 2025

Commissioners Present:
Lach Litwer, Chair
Alex Johnson
Robert Liberty (absent)
Laura Brennan Bissell (absent)

Staff Present:
Krystyna Wolniakowski
Bryce Guske
Connie Acker
Kelly Foster
Mike Schrankel
Joanna Kaiserman

After roll call, September 30, 2025, Economic Vitality meeting summary was approved by a voice vote.

Discussion of ADUs in the NSA

Chair Lach Litwer provided background and overview regarding the ADU discussion from the September 30, 2025, meeting. He asked Bryce Guske, Sr Land Use Planner, to provide some additional background.

Bryce summarized that at this time, they are not allowed in NSA. There are currently 15 different land use designations (LUDs) in the NSA such as large-scale agriculture, small scale agriculture, large woodland, small woodland, etc. However, in all LUDs there is only one dwelling allowed on one legal parcel. one parcel, one house.

Bryce continued that with the 2004 Management Plan review, there were no conversations related to ADUs. ADUs were discussed in 2020 but the Commission did not choose it as a focus topic for Plan review. Public comments were received but the Commission focused on four other topics instead. Additional comments were received after the Commission's work plan was developed for 2020 but again the Commission chose not to address ADUs.

There are some exceptions where additional housing is allowed in the NSA:
In Large Scale Agriculture LUD:

- Historical building – second dwelling is allowed if the historical structure will be protected

- If there is an agriculture operation, then a relative of the operator may be allowed a home
- Agriculture labor housing is allowed but is seasonal and limited to nine months
- Life estates are allowed with another home, but it has to be attached
- Duplexes are allowed only in "rural centers" of the NSA

The Management Plan allows accessory structures accessory to landowner's residence such as guest quarters, pottery studios, or storage sheds that can look like a dwelling unit. However, kitchens are not allowed in these structures. Given that they are inspected after they are built, but not regulated thereafter, they may end up being ADUs or short-term rentals.

Chair Litwer asked about the pervasiveness of "backdoor" ADUs, and Bryce replies that only the counties would know that information. There is no specific data unless the county is notified through a short-term rental monitoring program.

Krystyna asked if investing staff time in research and analyses of ADU data to develop a Plan Amendment would meet the Plan Amendment Rule that conditions in the NSA have changed enough to justify a Plan Amendment process to begin, or is it better to wait until the Plan review is initiated in July 2027 when such a test is not necessary?

Chair Litwer pointed out that there is a housing crisis in the region. Since he is an Oregon Governor's appointee, he knows that housing is a critical issue. He observed that there are the same observations and same problems on the WA side. He believes the crisis has been exacerbated since the last plan review.

Krystyna offered that the Plan amendment justification for rebuilding after the disaster was very clear. There were two fires and many homes and structures destroyed so it was urgent to move forward with an amendment to streamline the permitting process.

Jeff Litwak, legal counsel, quoted 350-50-030 which is the "Plan amendment rule" and described what constitutes a significant change in the NSA.

- *Physical changes to the landforms*
- *New information or inventory data*
- *Changes in legal, social, and economic conditions*

Jeff recommended re-reading the staff report for the proposed Plan amendment for rebuilding after a disaster which outlines the requirements that need to be met.

Chair Litwer stated that the commission should determine whether there are enough changes that would warrant a Plan amendment.

Jeff continued that staff would need to review standards in the NSA that have changed and present them to this committee and then to the full Commission. The disaster relief plan amendment required quite a lot of staff work, and this would be the same process. There needs to be a lot of analysis to define the changes in the NSA.

Lach stated that the economics of housing has dramatically changed in the NSA. It would surprise him if that the standard has not been met. The housing process have changed and increased dramatically in the last five years. If met, is this something the Commission would have the capacity to tackle before the next regularly scheduled Plan review process or sooner?

Krystyna asked how would ADUs potentially solve the housing crisis? It would be helpful to have the data that shows the housing shortage and data from other places that ADUs help alleviate that shortage. The shortage and high process and issues of affordability are felt across the country, not just in the NSA. ADUs are currently allowed in the urban areas where there is infrastructure and facilities that support homes.

Lach reminded the Committee of the dual purposes of the Act for both conservation and economic vitality. He stated that the legal framework needs to be navigated but asked how long the process might take and what is the staff's capacity to take this on?

Jeff said that the Litwak – disaster Plan Amendment work required several months of work by staff, and it was very focused, straight forward and not controversial. He is also now involved with the Rules Committee and in the middle of rulemaking. There is an upcoming commission meeting and holidays after the commission meeting.

Chair Litwer asked for staff to bring back potential timeline for a possible plan amendment related to ADUs.

Commissioner Johnson comes from an agricultural perspective. Housing is a crisis but agriculture in the Gorge has gotten notably harder in recent years – 40-200% increase in output costs such as labor. Would small and mid-size farmers benefit from ADUs? He believes they would. Topic would be difficult to move out of Committee and then present to the full Commission, and then public comment. This is a good topic to discuss in Committee but with reduced staff capacity and 1.5 yrs to next Plan Review, it may be good to wait.

Krystyna said that staff capacity is an issue. She will provide a possible timeline to determine whether ADUs could be a plan amendment or wait until the next Plan review in 2027.

Public Comment

Gil Kelley – Chair, Oregon Investment Board, stated that ADUs could enhance economic benefit for farms as affordable housing, but cautioned the committee and said we would need to keep an eye on use as short-term rentals.

Alexandra Howard – Deputy Director, Multnomah County Planning, introduced herself and thanked the committee for an invitation to participate.

WORK PLAN

Krystyna reviewed the workplan presented at an earlier meeting. She asked if the workplan as described had support from the committee.
She asked if there was support to explore policies related to agricultural income test which will require active and measurable income coming from agricultural operations to permit a permanent dwelling to be built. She said staff spoke with experts on this topic. Mike Schrankel, GIS Manager, is exploring how many agricultural tax lots are in each county and which ones already have structures.

Krystyna and staff:

- Met with OR State University Ag Extension service who have worked with Ag across Oregon. They were very helpful providing basic info regarding gross income values for different crops across OR and by county.
- Staff have not pursued this initial info further
- OR Department of Agriculture has asked for info about how the Commission is supporting and expanding opportunities for farmers. Krystyna and Lisa will be making a presentation the following day.
- Commissioner Liberty (in a past meeting) asked to identify where the Commission could support economic vitality in the urban areas.

The workplan was approved as presented.

Chair Litwer discussed the schedule for the committee meetings and suggested last Tuesday of each month. Committee decided on last Tuesday of each month.

- ✓ ***Follow-up Action*:** Krystyna and Jeff will provide more information about the Plan amendment definition and if there is enough

information to warrant a Plan amendment based on the rules. In addition, Krystyna will develop a proposed timeline if a Plan amendment would move forward to the full Commission.

Public Comment other than ADUs

- None

Approved: April 8, 2026