County office helping save rural landmarks

With tax credits now available to finance renovation and rehabilitation work, county officials are looking for developers, owners and residents who would like to make their rural landmarks more profitable and less of a strain on the property tax rolls.

In many parts of the county, though, the wagon is missing a wheel. Most communities don't have the resources to acquire and maintain landmarks, which are a historic, a regional landmark, and can provide greater advantages.

The county has a Landmarks Board, which includes smaller cities and towns don't, although King County's unincorporated area is the largest in the state. This year, a meeting of the County Landmarks Conservation Committee will be held in the county.

But the commission is stepping into its new role. In the next few months, under cooperative agreements with cities that are interested, Redmond could be the first - a draft agreement is being prepared by both parties. And the list of these cities includes Auburn, Issaquah, and Kirkland.

Kristine Lund, the county's historic-preservation officer and only commissioner in the county, said that in the commission's first year of operation, says there is great interest in the interlocal agreements, which would authorize the county group to review and designate historic properties with either county or city arranging the controls and incentives with owners.

"There is no one to do this coordination in the smaller communities," Ms. Lund explained. "A small town usually can't operate a landmarks board or certification program." But, with its process in place, the county will be able to step in and act as the way for these cities to proceed in restoring old buildings, and make it financially feasible through the tax credits.

Ms. Lund said that under the proposed agreements, a city would be asked to provide the funds and it may help all of the areas that document in order so that county staff time - that's what it would have to be spent gathering missing pieces. It is possible that a way to charge development fees for new buildings and conducting property-interest negotiations over historic designation will be developed.

In 1989, the county commission began official operation in November, "The phone rang off the hook," said Ms. Lund for "the folks from the "who wanted to know how the county could help in historic designation."

On other comission fronts, a process soon will be set for interlocal agreements. Large-scale development-building projects will be handled through the county office, which will have for historic-preservation purposes.

It's an incentive, Ms. Lund said; people to list their properties, if they are eligible, and grants from it will be available to projects which help to protect and save historic buildings.

Four King County landmarks are on the register now, and these are under consideration to be designated landmarks include the Clifton Mansion in Marymoor Park, Redmond; the Maudslay House near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport; the Hoh Rainforest on the Olympic Peninsula, and the Hoh Rainforest at Lake Boren, and the Neely Mansion, Auburn.

If the pipeline is a lower spread in Fall City's Riverfront Park, be-
lieved to be the only remaining of what once was a Harvey bumping ground, it is in the county; the Renig Road Sycamore-Corridor Interim Ordinance is now in effect, and the city and the county will be responsible for the development.

Before another year passes, it is very likely that the bill will be much longer - and work underway to save and reuse many landmarks involved.

The need for a quick bucker wouldn't surprise. People buying in your yard is a issue, even if it is during Seafair, the city's zoning officials agree.

There is an unusual spate of complaints about neighbors turning their yards into parking lots for nearby events where parking is scarce, they say. In Kent, Puyallup, and, birds, wreaths hang with the resident's means of neighborhoods.

There's another problem on the list of concerns, according to the National Apartment Association's Northeast Housing Survival Coalition, and it is a housing shortage.

One problem is the building permit buying: builders and contractors in the booming area of 10 to 15 years ago.

So what's that to the renter? It could mean higher rent, and home's value.

When the buildings were built - or purchased - a decade ago, the in-
teres rates were about half of today's $10 to 15 percent. Rents are being raised to meet the rising cost of operation, upkeep and a return on investment. Many mortgage or contract deals provided for payments at the time of the loan, and for 10 to 15 years, with a large one off the books at the end of the contract. That time has or is about to arrive, and the large payment will have to be financed - and the newly rising cost of interest rate, double what it was when the building was built.

Speaking of apartments, there are close to 250,000 rental-housing units in the Seattle area. And according to a new report by the National Apartment Association's Northeast Housing Survival Coalition, it is a housing shortage.

Among a mass of information about rents, numbers of units, comparisons of costs and statistics, the report points out that the highest median rents are in Redmond ($275) and Mercer Island ($275). In Seattle, the report says, there are 30 census tracts with a median over $300 - the highest median is $480, in a Magnolia tract - but the overall average city is $244, brought down by several tracts with median rents of only $90. A median rent is the middle figure in a list of rents, rather than an average obtained by adding all the figures up and dividing by the number of figures. The median is useful because it is not affected by unusually high or low rents.

The report is being sold for $19.50, and is available from its Kirk-
land office at 959 First St.