

December 3, 2021

Port of Astoria Waterfront Master Plan
RE: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

Summary by Walker Macy

As part of the Background and Existing Conditions phase of the project, the consultant team conducted Stakeholder Interviews with individuals having special knowledge about the Port's waterfront and interest in its future, selected by the City and Port. The consultant team hosted a series of meetings with individuals and groups to discuss the project, solicit feedback, and build a better understanding of the site, its context, its potential, challenges, and opportunities to inform the planning work.

Stakeholder Interviews included the following individuals.

Mayor Henry Balensifer III (Mayor of Warrenton, OR)
Ayreann Colombo (Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District)
Bruce Connor (Port of Astoria, Director of Cruise Industry Marketing)
Alan Evans (Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers)
Norma Hernandez (Astoria Parks and Recreation Board)
Senator Betsy Johnson (Oregon State Senate)
Frank Kemp (Astoria Riverfront Trolley Association)
Diana Kirk (Workers Tavern)
Kevin Leahy (Clatsop Economic Development Resources)
Nancy Montgomery (Columbia River Coffee Roaster)
Walt Postelwait (Craft3)
Jenny Pool Radway (Consejo Hispano)
Ganesh Sonpatki (Param Hotel Group, Riverwalk Inn Leaseholder)
Karen Van Cleve (Finnish Brotherhood)
Willis Van Dusen (Van Dusen Beverages)
Representative Suzanne Weber (Oregon State Legislature)
State of Oregon North Coast Regional Solutions Team Attendees:
Melanie Olson (Business Oregon)
Chris Castelli (Department of State Lands)
Jae Pudewell (Department of Transportation)
Lisa Phipps (Department of Land Conservation & Development)

Over hours of conversation, the team gathered detailed information, opinions, and suggestions reflecting a broad range of perspectives and priorities. However, some recurring themes and impressions emerged. The following is a summary of salient input from the stakeholder interviews.

Significance

- This is a very important site and opportunity for Astoria; it could be part of a “renaissance” for the city. The site deserves an inspired vision and durable, strategic, long-term plan to achieve it.
- There is a great pride in this community and a desire to celebrate Astoria’s heritage and community spirit. The site itself has meaning to many people, as a connection to the river and the city’s maritime history.
- The site’s redevelopment warrants attention and support at the state and federal levels.

Working Waterfront

- The Port of Astoria is a working waterfront. It is important that the City’s zoning regulations do not challenge or impair the Port’s ability to maintain and expand industrial uses and supportive businesses on its property, in order to continue as a viable generator of economic growth and prosperity for the region.
- Utilizing a small portion of the property for business incubators would help support local entrepreneurs. Businesses incubated on the site would include maritime-based industrial and light manufacturing startups.
- It is important to recognize that this region has little land still available for water-dependent industrial uses. Pier 1 land is very valuable and should be preserved for industrial use.
- The Port should take a long-term look at the future of water-dependent industries, and any development should keep Pier 1 flexible for changing industrial markets and uses, such as manufacturing and assembly related to emerging technologies, and services for the ships that transport those materials.

West Mooring Basin Marina

- The West Mooring Basin Marina is the most visible and public part of the Port site.
- The West Mooring Basin Marina and sport fishing industry are important to the economic support of local business. Over the years, the marina has lost crucial support services like ice supply, fish processing, and bait. These should be replaced, to support sport fishing, fishermen, and the economy fueled by their business.
- The fishing opportunities and views of the river and bridge warrant a modern, upscale hotel overlooking the West Mooring Basin Marina. Options for longer-term rentals, more amenities, small conference space, and more commercial activity would increase occupancy during the off-season.

Public Access and Use

- There is enthusiasm for a fish market in this area, a place where the community can buy fresh fish directly from vendors. This could be combined with a public market with shops and services for locals and tourists alike.
- Locals appreciate and use the Riverwalk and Trolley.
- The west end of the Riverwalk isn't highly used given its lack of pedestrian amenities, wayfinding, and sense of safety. The Memorial Park area at the east end attracts unsafe, undesirable activity at night. In general, more lighting, security, and commercial activity are needed throughout the site.
- Connections to Uniontown and downtown are key to the success of the site. These connections should come in the form of an enhanced Riverwalk, improved signage for vehicular traffic, and an improved street grid at the east end of the site.

Socioeconomic Issues

- There has been a change in the City's economics with the influx of new residents and increasing housing prices, especially over the last few years. There is now a feeling of "us vs them" between legacy residents and new arrivals, and concern about the impacts to legacy residents' way of life and the city's future.
- Astoria needs affordable housing options, but most stakeholders felt that the priority for this site should be commercial/industrial, and that this site was not an appropriate location for housing if it comes at the expense of commercial/industrial uses.
- The LatinX community in particular lacks access to housing and support services.

Cruise Operations

- Though the site is functional as a port of call, there are plenty of opportunities to improve the operations and experience for the cruise lines, passengers, and the Astoria community.
- Arrival by cruise ships and other boats should be impressive, friendly, and easy, with good pedestrian access through the site and connections to surrounding businesses and destinations beyond.
- Site development could leverage cruise operations to bring benefits to Astoria. The cruise ships bring thousands of passengers to the site and provide opportunities for local businesses. Cruise lines could help support a cruise terminal building with market space and services that serve passengers, crews, and locals.