advance astoria

A Five-Year Economic Development Strategy for the City of Astoria, Oregon

July 2017
acknowledgements

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At its heart, the Advance Astoria project refined and reinforced a community vision for what Astoria’s economy can and should be. This vision has earned broad community support and represents a guiding principle for goal-setting and planning for the economic future of Astoria.

This five-year, action-oriented plan is designed to provide near-term guidance as City of Astoria staff and partners, as well as local institutions, businesses, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations and others work to make this vision a reality.

Astoria is the North Coast center for economic development and international commerce and seeks to be the sustainable leader to support family wage jobs, entrepreneurs, and private investment.

Astoria will work with its partners to grow 200 high wage jobs by 2021 and expand economic opportunities and prosperity for all Astorians.
background & purpose>>

A Batch Strategy: Growing Our Economy Smarter

An industry-based approach to economic development is referred to as a “cluster strategy.” However, here in Astoria we do things differently. Astoria makes things in batches — whether it’s world class beer, warm and fuzzy hats to brave the weather, or fresh-caught seafood.

A “batch strategy” then is strategy rooted in the specific needs and attributes of a group of geographically concentrated, inter-related businesses. Companies, institutions, and entrepreneurs that locate in a batch benefit from a skilled labor force, increased innovation, coordinated advocacy efforts, synergistic supply chains, and a cross pollination of knowledge. A batch strategy can facilitate interaction in ways that establish competitive advantages through the creation and incorporation of new knowledge into products and services, and the processes that produce them.

The City of Astoria understands and embraces the importance of building strong connections among its industry batches, and that's why we support initiatives that strengthen cooperation and competitive advantages for Astoria-based companies.

As a result, the City of Astoria has developed a batch strategy that targets traded sectors — sectors with markets outside the region, bringing new money into the community. The strategy also targets knowledge-based sectors that attract a highly skilled labor pool, growing research and development functions within local institutions. Lastly, Astoria supports home-grown industries that start in a garage, a backyard, or in a research lab. Astoria will continue to support home-based businesses and grow its local entrepreneurial ecosystem to support startups, spinoffs, and cultivate the next generation of businesses that are sustainable and competitive in a global marketplace.
Community Engagement

This economic development strategy began with rigorous data analysis and the creation of an Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA), including a detailed land capacity analysis that meets the requirements of the State of Oregon. The project also included robust community engagement, the results of which helped to direct the development of the strategies and actions contained in this document.

The City employed multiple engagement methods in order to capture a significant number and wide variety of respondents and to ensure that all perspectives were represented. These methods included the following:

The creation of the **Advance Party**, a technical advisory panel that meets periodically, reviews and advises on work products, represents critical industries and works to engage the broader public.

The hosting of two **community forums** to disseminate project information and technical data to stakeholders and to obtain feedback from members of the community. Though the forums are primarily intended to convey information about the project to the community, comments have been encouraged and accepted and integrated into the data profile.

**Panel discussions** featuring a diverse array of business and industry leaders have been scheduled to follow select forums and Advance Party meetings. The public is invited to attend these discussions, which generate interest in the project and provide insight into economic development challenges, as well as innovative solutions to these challenges, from other locations in the region.
An online and print survey widely distributed and promoted at the community forums. The survey resulted in more than 90 individual responses to 13 unique questions about economic development challenges and opportunities in Astoria, and the results will be leveraged for the development of strategic priorities and tailored actions.

A pop-up display was deployed at community events and meetings to engage people who were unable to attend the community forums and other activities. The three panel display was paired with a “postcard from the future”, where participants could share their specific and general visions for Astoria’s economic future.

A series of five focus groups were conducted with key representatives of local industries to understand the factors affecting known industry clusters in Astoria. These intensive focus groups included up to eight participants and focused on industry-specific challenges and opportunities directly relevant to an economic development strategy. Numerous follow-up interviews were conducted to supplement focus group participation.

From March through June of 2017, the Advance Astoria project engaged hundreds of Astoria residents, business owners, employees, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to contribute insights and ideas for economic development.
Proceeding from the Data

The aforementioned Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) evaluated socio-economic data, market data, and economic development trends at multiple scales and developed a forecast-based estimate of the demand for developable and redevelopable sites in Astoria. This estimate of demand was reconciled with an estimate of the supply of these sites based on the City of Astoria and Clatsop County’s inventory of parcels and constraints to provide a quantitative, place-based understanding of local opportunities for growth. The data and analytics also highlighted a number of important strategic opportunities and challenges for economic growth, diversification, sustainability and equity in the City of Astoria and surrounding region.

The following excerpts summarize key findings from the analysis.

Global & National Trends

After the recession in 2009, the world economy has rebounded unevenly, with robust centers of growth emerging in Asian markets. China’s growth, which has paced the planet for the last several years, is slowing, and the potential for a new wave of protectionist policies adds to an uncertain future for trade, especially in domestic regional economies that trade extensively with China and other Asian countries. China accounts for the vast majority of Port of Astoria exports.

The U.S. economy has generally improved since the recession, with decreased unemployment and increased real GDP. However, wages have been stagnant.

Regional Trends

Northwest Oregon, like much of the Pacific Northwest, is experiencing a prolonged decline in resource-based employment. Some of these industries, such as seafood processing, are likely to maintain a strong presence in Astoria into the future, while others may subside. New economic drivers will emerge, especially as a result of cross-pollination from larger metros like Portland.
Local Trends

The largest industry in Astoria, by far, is educational services, health care and social assistance. These jobs often pay good wages, and Astoria also benefits from relatively high levels of educational attainment. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that housing affordability is a key issue.

Land Supply & Demand

The forecast indicates that employment in Astoria will grow by about 1% annually, adding about 1,400 net new jobs by 2040. This could require about 125 acres of developable and redevelopable land in Astoria. This study suggests that Astoria currently has enough land to meet this need, though some rezoning and intensification may be required to accommodate all new growth.

Map of Astoria’s “Meds & Eds” cluster of local medical and educational institutions and related organizations and businesses.
Pop-up displays presented key data to describe Astoria’s historic economic drivers and current economic challenges.
Navigating This Document

The following section presents strategies, actions, and supporting information aimed at diversifying, growing, and sustaining Astoria’s economy for the next five years. These strategies and actions benefit Astoria’s economic foundations, but also focus on specific, target industry “batches” that hold particular promise for Astoria. The section also presents supporting information to spur implementation, including “quick wins” — aimed at developing rapid momentum and excitement around individual strategies — lead and supporting actors, and instructive case studies.

The plan contains 12 Focus Areas, including 7 Foundational, and 5 Batch Focus Areas. Color-coded icon tabs and titles distinguish each.

One Strategy per Focus Area is listed at the beginning of each section. Strategies represent a cohesive approach to achieving a goal and consist of a number of specific, inter-related actions.

Actions are where the rubber hits the road in this plan. Specific, implementable tactical measures are highlighted and organized numerically.

Actions denoted as “Quick Wins” are marked by a stopwatch icon.

Lead actors and Partners suggest key organizations and partnerships for successful implementation.

On some pages, Case Studies are included to offer comparative examples from other locations.

**Development & Permitting**

- **Foundational >> Strategy 4** Ensure that adopted permitting & development regulations provide adequate flexibility, clarity and predictability to foster economic growth

  **Action 4.1 Zoning Flexibility**
  Continue to provide flexibility in the interpretation and application of zoning requirements to encourage adaptive reuse and compatible commercial/industrial development
  
  **Lead:** City of Astoria Community Development Dept.
  **Partners:** None

  **Action 4.2 Online Permitting**
  Continue to expand City of Astoria’s online permitting and development resources

  **Lead:** City of Astoria Community Development Dept.
  **Partners:** City of Astoria Public Works, Finance Dept.

[Case Study]

Oregon Certified Shovel Ready
Statewide, Oregon

Today’s business environment demands that a supply of market-ready, employment-oriented sites specifically zoned for industrial or traded sector uses are available for development within 180 days or less. Oregon’s Certified Shovel Ready program meets this demand by verifying that a site is market-ready and developable. Certified sites are then advertised in the global real estate market to attract and grow traded-sector businesses in Oregon.
Foundational >> Strategy 1  Expand the supply of affordable and market rate housing in Astoria

**Action 1.1  Astoria Housing Strategy**
Use the forthcoming Astoria Housing Strategy to expand housing options for all Astorians

*Lead:* City of Astoria  
*Partners:* Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR); Craft3

**Action 1.2  Housing Typologies**
Explore the viability of new housing types through workforce training partnerships that leverage construction trades

*Lead:* North Coast Building Industry Association  
*Partners:* Astoria Makers, Astoria High School; Clatsop Community College
Action 1.3  Seasonal Co-Housing

Explore the feasibility of private sector co-housing programs and other extended stay lodging options for seasonal or specialty workers in resource and related industries.

Lead: Batch Leads
Partners: Port of Astoria

Demand for housing in Astoria far outstrips supply; the lack of available housing units to meet demand across a range of affordability levels constrains economic development by making it difficult for qualified workers to find places to live. Source: Community Attributes
Foundational >> Strategy 2  Leverage Astoria’s significant educational resources to better meet the needs of local industries

Action 2.1  Online Clearinghouse

Create an online clearinghouse to centralize resources and information related to workforce training and development programs through OSU Extension, Clatsop Community College’s Marine & Environmental Research & Training Station (MERTS), local and regional public schools and other institutions.

**Lead:** City of Astoria (to convene & facilitate)

**Partners:** Astoria School District; Clatsop Economic Development Resources; Clatsop Community College; Oregon Employment Dept.; Workforce Development Board

Clatsop Community College in Astoria enjoys a close relationship with the community, adapting programs to needs, offering degrees & certificates in a variety of disciplines, and enriching the region’s unique cultural offerings.

Source: Clatsop County Community College
**Action 2.2  Internships & Apprenticeships**

Partner with local industries and businesses to expand internship and apprenticeship programs to match local employer needs

**Lead:** TBD  
**Partners:** Astoria School District; CEDR; CCC; Oregon Employment Dept.; Workforce Development Board; Educational Service District

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**Action 2.3  Scholarship Funding**

Identify funding sources for scholarship programs targeting skilled workforce development related to Astoria’s target batches

**Lead:** Clatsop Community College  
**Partners:** Scholarships Inc.
Foundational >> Strategy 3  Develop & market an Astoria brand rooted in the City’s unique history, character and identity

**Action 3.1  An Astoria Brand**  
Facilitate conversations within industry batches and between key stakeholders to identify and develop clear branding initiatives  

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce; Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA); Travel Oregon; Batch Leaders

**Action 3.2  Marketing & Messaging**  
Apply Astoria’s brand to communications, marketing, and other materials to align marketing efforts  

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Chamber of Commerce; ADHDA
**Action 3.3  Communicating Successes**

Communicate the City of Astoria's community and economic development successes via press releases, interviews, and social media

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Chamber of Commerce; ADHDA

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**Action 3.4  Social Media**

Coordinate internally and externally to leverage social media channels for dissemination of information related to economic development assets, success stories, events, and networking and employment opportunities

**Lead:** Chamber of Commerce  
**Partners:** Batch Leaders
Foundational >> Strategy 4  Ensure that adopted permitting & development regulations provide adequate flexibility, clarity and predictability to foster economic growth

**Action 4.1  Zoning Flexibility**

Continue to provide flexibility in the interpretation and application of zoning requirements to encourage adaptive reuse and compatible commercial/industrial development

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development (DLCD)

**Action 4.2  Online Permitting**

Expand the functionality and utility of Astoria’s front-facing online permitting and permit tracking system, including reference information and other resources

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Building Codes Division (BCD)

**CASE STUDY**

**Oregon Certified Shovel Ready**  
**Statewide, Oregon**

Today’s business environment demands that a supply of market-ready, employment-oriented sites specifically zoned for industrial or traded-sector uses are available for development within 180 days or less. Oregon’s Certified Shovel Ready program meets this demand by verifying that a site is market-ready and developable. Certified sites are then advertised in the global real estate market to attract and grow traded-sector businesses in Oregon.
**Action 4.3  New Biz Onboarding**

Develop and implement a coordinated onboarding system for new and small businesses, in coordination with Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR), Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA), and other partners

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Clatsop Economic Development Resources (CEDR); Astoria Downtown Historical Development Association (ADHDA); Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

**Action 4.4  Shovel-Ready Certification**

Develop a “Shovel-Ready” certification to focus interest and resources on key industrial and commercial development sites in Astoria

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Business Oregon; Department of Environmental Quality; Port of Astoria; Private Property Owners

Key industrial and commercial development sites in Astoria, including the Port Cargo Yard, the Astoria Ford site, and the “AgBag” site, could benefit from a “Shovel-Ready Certification” to signal readiness of the sites for redevelopment.  
Source: Community Attributes
Foundational >> Strategy 5  Continue to build on Astoria’s reputation and attraction as northwest Oregon’s most authentic and livable city

**Action 5.1  Neighborhood Centers**

Continue to build on retail and service provision in Astoria’s Uniontown and South Slope neighborhoods

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Transportation & Growth Management Program

**Action 5.2  Downtown Public Spaces**

Consolidate, improve, and expand programming of public spaces in downtown Astoria; consider re-purposing underperforming spaces for commercial spec space

**Lead:** Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA)  
**Partners:** City of Astoria
**Action 5.3  Facade Improvement**

Expand Astoria’s “extreme makeover” matching grant program for continued façade improvement in Astoria’s commercial centers

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA)

**Action 5.4  Natural Assets**

Promote Astoria’s natural and recreational assets and enhance livability by expanding eco-tourism options available to Astoria visitors and residents

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Parks & Recreation; Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

**Action 5.5  Arts, Culture & Heritage**

Support Astoria’s growing local arts, culture and heritage activities and offerings with marketing, space, and facilitation

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Astoria Visual Arts; Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce
Foundational >> Strategy 6  Provide the infrastructure necessary to support business retention, recruitment, creation and expansion

Action 6.1  Filtration Capacity

Ensure the long-term supply of high-quality water in Astoria by planning for adequate filtration capacity

Lead: City of Astoria
Partners: Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA)

Figure 8: Funding Gap for Aspirational Projects

Exhibit from Astoria’s 2013 Transportation System Plan illustrating the projected funding gap for aspirational projects outlined in the plan.
Action 6.2  Community Broadband

Explore community broadband best practices to grow reliable high-speed data provision to homes and businesses in Astoria

Lead: City of Astoria (to convene & facilitate)
Partners: Craft3; Port of Astoria; IT Community

Action 6.3  TSP Implementation

Identify and secure funding sources for implementation of the Transportation System Plan and to expand local and regional transit service capacity

Lead: City of Astoria
Partners: Sunset Empire Transit District; Tongue Point Job Corps; Seafood Processing Batch; Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
**Foundational >> Strategy 7** Leverage cooperative structures & financing tools to empower local businesses, foundations & not-for-profit organizations

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**Action 7.2 Funders Network Roundtable**

Create a “Funders Network Roundtable” aimed at convening funders from Astoria and throughout Oregon to empower local capacity building efforts by Astoria foundations & non-profits

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Association of Oregon Non-Profits

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**Action 7.3 Made in Astoria**

Develop & solicit membership in a “Made in Astoria” (or similar) campaign for certification, marketing and resources to support local production & technology

**Lead:** Astoria Makers  
**Partners:** Astoria Downtown Historic District Association (ADHDA); Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce
**Action 7.4  Commercial Kitchen**

Facilitate a partnership to assess the feasibility of finding or developing a shared commercial kitchen for local value-added producers

**Lead:** City of Astoria (to convene & facilitate)  
**Partners:** OSU Seafood Lab; Astoria Co-op; North Coast Food Web

**Action 7.5  Equity Fund**

Investigate foundation grants to underwrite an “Equity Fund” for small loans or to capitalize existing Revolving Loan Fund

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Craft3

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**CASE STUDY**

**Made In Tacoma**  
**Tacoma, WA**

Made in Tacoma is a nascent movement in support of local manufacturers and makers in the model of SF Made. The program, still under development, seeks to “strengthen and empower the eco-system for artists, artisans, makers, and micro-manufacturers in our communities”. SFMade engages directly with entrepreneurs and growing small companies to offer industry-specific education, networking opportunities, and connection with powerful local resources. It also engages with the larger community, offering educational workshops, factory tours, and other programs to heighten public awareness of manufacturing, the craftspeople they employ, and their collective role in the local economy.
Batch >> Strategy 8  Leverage existing anchors and other resources to support and grow new and existing craft beverage & fermentation sector activity

**Action 8.1  Fermentation Science Program**

Support the creation and/or expansion of a fermentation science or similar program at Clatsop Community College with support from Oregon State University

**Lead:** Clatsop Community College  
**Partners:** Oregon State University

**Action 8.2  Lease This Brewery**

Support a shared-equipment incubator concept or “lease this brewery” model to support the creation and growth of new craft beverage establishments

**Lead:** Batch Leaders  
**Partners:** City of Astoria
**Action 8.3  Brewing Coalition**

Create a “brewing coalition” to share knowledge and talent, and foster new initiatives to improve sustainability practices

**Lead:** Batch Leaders  
**Partners:** Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

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**Action 8.4  Targeted Recruitment**

Engage and recruit beverage-makers to complement and strengthen existing craft beverage and fermentation batch activities in Oregon

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

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Oregon State University’s Fermentation Science Program.  
Source: Oregon State University
Batch >> Strategy 9  Strengthen local educational and medical institutions that serve Astoria residents, create economic value and contribute to local innovation

**Action 9.1  Value-Added Production**

Recruit value-added products and services firms and research & development programs that leverage traditional North Coast natural resources

**Lead:** OSU Seafood Lab  
**Partners:** City of Astoria

**Action 9.2  Local Training**

Expand local health care training & education programs

**Lead:** Columbia Memorial Hospital  
**Partners:** Clatsop Community College; Oregon State University Extension Office

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**CASE STUDY**

**Cross-Laminated Timber**

Cross-laminated timber (CLT) is a large-scale, prefabricated, solid engineered wood panel.

**Hydrokinetic Turbine Energy**

Rotating devices capture the kinetic energy of a flow of water, such as a tidal stream, ocean current or river, as it passes across a rotor. The rotor turns with the current, creating rotational energy that is converted into electricity by a generator.
**Action 9.3 Hospital Master Plan**

Ensure that Columbia Memorial Hospital can accommodate future growth through a master plan; including supportive zoning, targeted capital improvements and other tools

**Lead:** Columbia Memorial Hospital  
**Partners:** City of Astoria

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**Action 9.4 Skilled Workforce Recruitment**

Connect employers in education and health care to national skilled workforce pools through branding, recruitment, relocation incentives and other tools

**Lead:** Columbia Memorial Hospital  
**Partners:** Clatsop Community College; Oregon State University Extension Office
Batch: Strategy 10 Expand maritime assets and infrastructure to become a national hub for maritime operations, training & related manufacturing

Action 10.1 Maritime Expansion
Identify zoning and infrastructure-related challenges to the expansion of maritime and supporting uses on appropriate lands in Astoria

Lead: City of Astoria; Clatsop Community College
Partners: Batch Leads; Port of Astoria

Action 10.2 Maritime Center of Excellence
Pursue federal designation as a “Maritime Center of Excellence” for Clatsop Community College’s Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station (MERTS) Campus

Lead: Clatsop Community College
Partners: Federal Delegation

Action 10.3 Support MERTS
Increase support for MERTS by securing additional land, equipment, faculty & other key resources to expand training of workers in the maritime industry cluster & grow program development to meet industry needs

Lead: Clatsop Community College
Partners: Port of Astoria, Clatsop
**Action 10.4  Synergistic Maritime**

Profile up- and down-stream relationships and undertake targeted recruitment of synergistic maritime firms, including suppliers and distributors to the sector

**Lead:** Port of Astoria  
**Partners:** Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

**Action 10.5  U.S. Coast Guard**

Partner with the locally-based U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River to identify public sector needs & priorities related to local operations & employment

**Lead:** City of Astoria  
**Partners:** U.S. Coast Guard, Clatsop County, Port of Astoria

Kvichiak Marine’s aluminum boat-building works near the small Pacific fishing fleet mooring at Fisherman’s Terminal in Seattle, WA. Source: Community Attributes
Microenterprise

**Batch >> Strategy 11** Nurture Astoria’s burgeoning entrepreneurial ecosystem to expand and diversify local economic opportunities

**Action 11.1  Astoria Sunday Market**
Partner with the Astoria Sunday Market to create a strategic plan for continued operations and future expansion

**Lead:** Astoria Sunday Market  
**Partners:** City of Astoria

**Action 11.2  Design & Prototyping Programs**
Establish design & prototyping programs for local entrepreneurs in partnership with local maker space and industry educators

**Lead:** Astoria Makers  
**Partners:** Clatsop Community College, Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce

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Astoria Sunday Market was formed to revitalize historic downtown Astoria and to improve the economic viability and vitality of farmers, artists, artisans and other small business operators in the Pacific Northwest. Source: StreamingAround.com
**Action 11.3  Astoria Co-Working Space**

Support the creation of a co-working space in Astoria that allows employees and entrepreneurs to grow and work untethered.

- **Lead:** Pier 12
- **Partners:** City of Astoria

**Action 11.4  Rural Opportunities Initiative**

Apply for Business Oregon’s Rural Opportunities Initiative to bring more resources to entrepreneurs.

- **Lead:** City of Astoria
- **Partners:** Business Oregon
Batch >> Strategy 12  Support strengthening & diversification of seafood processing as a lasting economic engine for Astoria and the region

Action 12.1  Value-Added Products

Identify & expand local production of innovative value-added seafood products, including pre-packaged goods

Lead: Batch Leads
Partners: OSU Seafood Lab

Action 12.2  Supportive Activity

Target recruitment of supporting marine dependent businesses to waterfront, including boat-builders, net storage & repair, engine & hydraulic shops, and marine fabrication

Lead: Batch Leads
Partners: Port of Astoria, City of Astoria
Action 12.3  Research & Development

Identify research practices that can advance the industry and encourage innovation in product development

Lead: Batch Leads
Partners: OSU Extension Office

Action 12.4  Workforce Recruitment

Aid local companies in recruiting workers for seasonal and permanent job openings

Lead: Batch Leads
Partners: Clatsop Community College; MERTS

Oregon State University’s Seafood Research & Education Center - the OSU Seafood Lab - conducts research focusing on production, quality and safety of seafood in Astoria, Oregon. Source: The Daily Astorian
Five-Year Economic Strategy for the City of Astoria