

Astoria RIVERFRONT VISION PLAN



December 2009



THE CITY OF ASTORIA, OREGON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Financial assistance for this document provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Ocean and Coastal Management Program, Department of Land Conservation and Development.

Columbia River Maritime Museum cover photo by Michael Mathers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
History	6
Existing Conditions.....	9
Visioning Process	23
Visioning Principles	27
Vision (Four-Area Concept)	29
Bridge Vista.....	33
Urban Core.....	47
Civic Greenway.....	63
Neighborhood Greenway.....	81
Riverfront Vision Plan Implementation.....	93
Appendix.....	103
Community forum summaries	
Leasing issues summary	
Condo/market assessment memo	
Parking plan outline	
Stakeholder interview summary	
Steering Committee Meeting summaries	
Survey summaries	
Development Code summaries	

Appendices are available in a separate document upon request to the City of Astoria, Community Development Department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to its beautiful location along the Columbia River, burgeoning artist community, unique civic character and strategic investment, the City of Astoria is a growing and vital community. Astoria's riverfront and downtown have seen new development and redevelopment projects and proposals in recent years. Projects include the Liberty Theater, Hotel Elliott, Red Building, Pier 39, Cannery Pier Hotel, and new residential development. While such projects have helped transform and revitalize Astoria's economy, the pace of change has caused concern that the community's quality could be affected.

Some of the concerns stem from changes to the physical or built environment. Others stem from how these projects could affect the diversity of the local population, including increases in the City's seasonal residents. Key concerns relate to the height, size and appearance of new buildings; physical and visual access to the Columbia River; impacts to the historic nature of the riverfront; the extent of potential additional overwater development; a desire to maintain and create new open spaces within the riverfront area; and the goal of continuing to plan the future of Astoria for Astorians.

To address these issues, the City has worked with the community to establish a comprehensive riverfront vision, ensuring equitable riverfront growth by balancing development, and both public and private investment in the area with the desire to preserve Astoria's quality of life and connection to its unique history. The Draft Vision Plan is a culmination of the work completed from spring 2008 through summer 2009 through an intensive community involvement process. Over this time, hundreds of Astorians participated in steering committee meetings, stakeholder interviews and surveys, four community-wide forums,

three open houses and additional community meetings. During this time key elements of the Draft Astoria Riverfront Vision were on display throughout the City, including displays related to core vision principles, land use and urban design recommendations, natural features, parks and open spaces and transportation and other public improvements.



Astoria Riverfront Trolley

This Vision Plan attempts to balance a variety of sometimes competing viewpoints and objectives among Astoria's citizens. It addresses issues and goals related to natural resource and scenic values, community character, private property rights, transportation mobility, historic preservation, and a variety of other topics. The Plan is built around the following core principles:

- ◆ Promote physical and visual access to the river.
- ◆ Encourage a mix of uses that supports Astoria's "working waterfront" and the City's economy.
- ◆ Support new development that respects Astoria's historic character.
- ◆ Protect the health of the river and adjacent natural areas.
- ◆ Enhance the River Trail.

More specific strategies for achieving these principles are described in the following sections of this Plan.

Creating and articulating a vision for an area as large and diverse as the Astoria riverfront is challenging. The Plan area is approximately four miles long and home to a very diverse set of landscapes, homes, businesses, people and viewpoints. To facilitate and organize the vision, the project team developed a four-area concept that recognizes the traditional makeup of the area and some distinct differences between subareas within the riverfront planning area. The four areas include the Bridge Vista, Urban Core, Civic Greenway and Neighborhood Greenway areas which are illustrated and described on the map on the following page.



Astorians discuss the future of their riverfront

Much of the visioning work and a large portion of this report are organized around these four areas. For each area, the Vision Plan includes the following key elements:

- ◆ Guiding development and design principles
- ◆ Land use and urban design recommendations related to land use, building mass and height, the desired extent of overwater development and building and site design
- ◆ Proposed transportation and other public improvements, including enhancements to gateways, roads, the River Trail and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- ◆ Natural features, including recommendations related to parks, open space and other natural resources

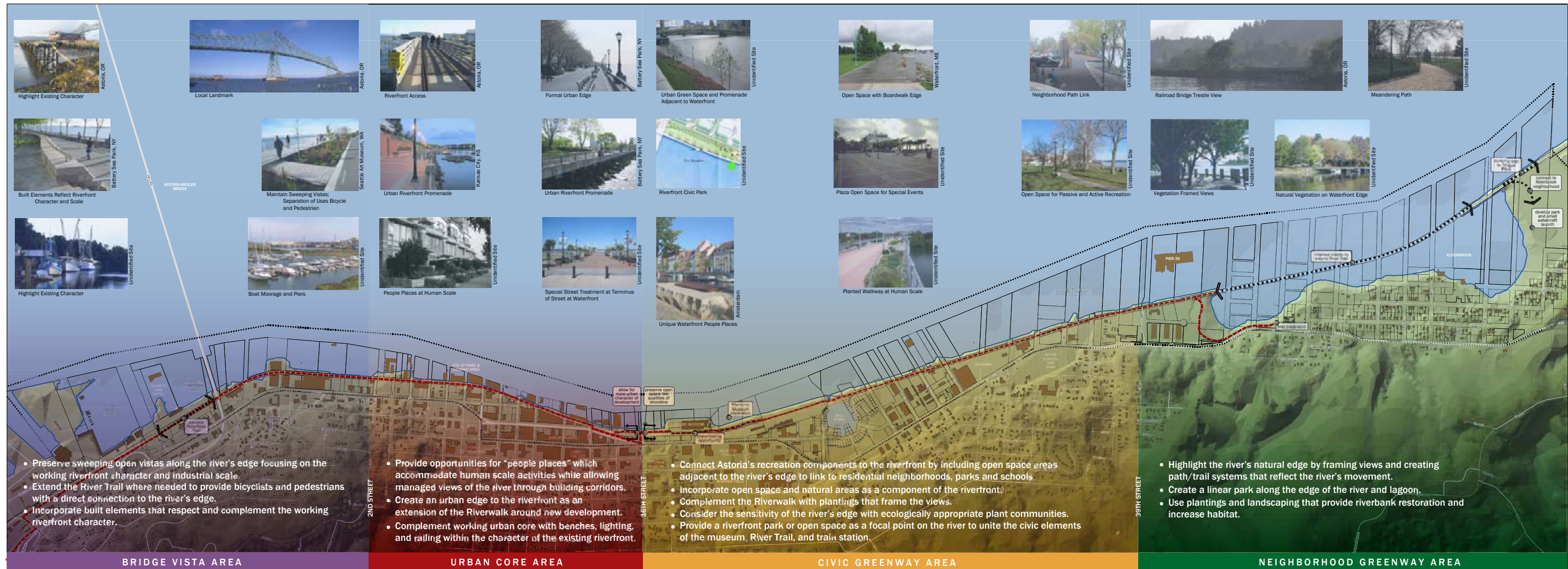
Some of the Plan's key recommendations include the following:

- ◆ Plan for lower scale and reduced future overwater development, particularly in the Civic Greenway and Neighborhood Greenway areas to maintain views of the river and a sense of open space and connection to the natural landscape along the riverfront.
- ◆ Development should maintain a sense of openness along the River Trail by setting buildings back from the trail, stepping back the upper stories of buildings and creating opportunities for passageways, courtyards and other open areas within new developments.
- ◆ Create a design review process and/or new design review standards to ensure that new development respects the community's unique character.
- ◆ Create opportunities for a modest scale residential neighborhood on land between Mill Pond and Safeway that is set back from the River Trail, incorporates open areas, is characterized by a modest scale of development and is targeted to working families and other full-time Astoria residents.
- ◆ Continue to improve the River Trail.



New development should respect Astoria's unique character

Four-Area Map



- Preserve sweeping open vistas along the river's edge focusing on the working riverfront character and industrial scale.
- Extend the River Trail where needed to provide bicyclists and pedestrians with a direct connection to the river's edge.
- Incorporate built elements that respect and complement the working riverfront character.

- Provide opportunities for "people places" which accommodate human scale activities while allowing managed views of the river through building corridors.
- Create an urban edge to the riverfront as an extension of the Riverwalk around new development.
- Complement working urban core with benches, lighting, and railing within the character of the existing riverfront.

- Connect Astoria's recreation components to the riverfront by including open space areas adjacent to the river's edge to link to residential neighborhoods, parks and schools.
- Incorporate open space and natural areas as a component of the riverfront.
- Complement the Riverwalk with plantings that frame the views.
- Consider the sensitivity of the river's edge with ecologically appropriate plant communities.
- Provide a riverfront park or open space as a focal point on the river to unite the civic elements of the museum, River Trail, and train station.

- Highlight the river's natural edge by framing views and creating path/trail systems that reflect the river's movement.
- Create a linear park along the edge of the river and lagoon.
- Use plantings and landscaping that provide riverbank restoration and increase habitat.



ASTORIA RIVERFRONT VISION PLAN
Natural Resource and Open Space Map

- ⊕ opportunity
- riverfront study area
- shoreline
- existing building
- publicly-owned parcel
- River Trail

Note: The photographs on this map are examples of waterfront treatments from other communities. Concepts that are ultimately used in Astoria will be consistent with the Astoria Riverfront Vision.
Note: This map identifies tax lots shown on the tax roles as owned by public jurisdictions. In addition, submerged land located along the Columbia River, in most cases, continues to be owned by the State of Oregon. Public or private entities may lease the overwater properties from the State.



1 Miles

Source: Clatsop County, City of Astoria Funding provided in part by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.