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# Columbia Connections

Newsletter of the Southwest Section of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association

## Port of Vancouver: An Anchor in SW Washington's Economy

*By Larry Paulson, Executive Director, Port of Vancouver*

The Port of Vancouver USA has a game plan, established by its Commissioners, to help anchor this community's economy. And it is important that the Port remains on track in its plans so that it can take advantage of the opportunities that will arise as we come out of the current recession.

Global trade issues, climate change, and environmental initiatives, as well as the flagging economy, are issues that face the Port in the coming year, but with a focus on positioning itself to be ready when the economic pendulum swings back and the storm passes, the Port is working hard to address those issues.

Wind energy projects remain a bright spot. They are of national significance and, with the new federal administration reinforcing the need for this renewable energy resource, wind energy projects will continue to be built.

The Port is very well positioned to import the components of these projects. Wind energy generates jobs – good and green jobs – in the community and across the country. In 2009, the Port anticipates handling more than 3,000 wind energy components. This work will bring 235 jobs to the community and contribute \$20 million in economic value—and this is just the jobs and value created by moving the cargo through the Port.

Grain exports have slipped slightly because droughts in Australia and other countries have subsided and the domestic production of grain from these countries has increased global supplies.

The auto market has slowed dramatically—Subaru (a Port tenant) being the exception. But there is hope ahead as the national and global auto markets adjust to focus on more fuel-efficient vehicles.

As the Port considers the future, its Commissioners and staff understand that the community needs it to be a leader in generating jobs and keeping them here.

The Port itself contributes by constructing projects today that will solidify new, permanent jobs in the future. The West Vancouver Freight Access project is a prime example. Projections for this project between now and its completion in 2017 are that it will create as many as 1,900 construction, consulting, engineering, and design jobs. The development of Terminal 5 at the former Alcoa Aluminum smelter, scheduled to begin later this year, together with the development of a green industrial park at the former Rufener farm, will result in construction jobs now and hundreds of permanent jobs in the future.

While accomplishing these development and construction projects, the Port also keeps an eye on its environmental responsibilities. In 2009, construction will be finished on the final elements of the Port's groundwater cleanup program just south of the Fruit Valley neighborhood – a project the Port inherited as a result of the former landowner's industrial activities. The Port is also taking the initial steps in putting together a wetland mitigation bank, the first in Southwest Washington.

All of this is happening because the Port and its Commissioners have the land, energy, and vision to make it happen.

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# Announcements

**The Southwest Section installed new Board officers** in January. The elected officers for the next 2 years are Chad Eiken, president; Karyn Criswell, president-elect; Joanne Boys, treasurer; and James Howsley, secretary. The county representatives are: Gary Albrecht, Clark County; Kei Zushi, Cowlitz County; and Karen Witherspoon, Skamania County.

**Washington APA Conference Coming to Vancouver.** As you may remember, the Washington APA Conference is being held in Vancouver in November. A number of Southwest Section members are serving on committees that are busy making plans. Many exciting ideas are brewing for keynote speakers, breakout sessions, mobile workshops, and social events. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Chad Eiken at [chad.eiken@ci.vancouver.wa.us](mailto:chad.eiken@ci.vancouver.wa.us).

**The next quarterly GMA Planners Forum** is scheduled for Thursday, April 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Vancouver's Development Review Services Building, 4400 NE 77th Ave.

(3rd Floor). Representatives from the Department of Ecology will discuss several recent interpretations of state shoreline policies and regulations.

**APA Web Conference Training Series Sponsored by SW Section.** These 1.5-hour seminars focus on various planning topics. Seminars are AICP credit-eligible. Cost for each is \$10. For detailed seminar descriptions, please visit the website at [www.planning.org/audioconference](http://www.planning.org/audioconference).

**Upcoming seminars include:**

- **Designing for Water Conservation,** Wednesday, March 18, 2009, from 1:00-2:30 pm, Woodland City Hall, 100 Davidson, Cost is \$10 at the door.
- **Zoning for Transit-Oriented Development,** Wednesday, April 15, 2009, from 1:00-2:30, Camas City Hall, 616 NE 4th Ave, Cost is \$10 at the door.



On March 4th, the Section held its **2nd annual Winter Social Event at Big Al's Bowling**. Over 60 attendees came to see eleven teams of planners from both the private and public sectors compete for the much-coveted golden pin trophy, which was handily won by a team of Vancouver Planning Commissioners. Several firms helped with financial support of the event, including Parametrix, Berger/Abam, Group MacKenzie, and Eric Hovee and Associates. This was a great opportunity for planners to interact with their colleagues over pizza and beer, wear silly costumes, and forget about the economy for an evening.



# CREDC...Doing Three Simple Things

*Bart Philips, Chief Executive and Operating Officer, CREDC*

The public's interest in and expectations of local economic development efforts are counter-cyclical to the economy. As the current recession deepens, citizens of Southwest Washington want to know what is being done about creating jobs and investment—now. The Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC) has only one part of that answer; we share the responsibility for economic development with state, local, and federal governments and other non-profit agencies such as the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council.

The CREDC is a regional public/ private partnership focused on job creation and the generation of new wealth in our community. We do three very simple things: we work with existing businesses to support their expansion, we recruit new firms to the region, and we work on broad policy initiatives to lay the foundation for the region's economy in the future.

Contrary to popular belief, the CREDC expends as much effort on expanding existing firms as recruitment. Over the next 10 months, senior staff members Jeanie Ashe and Jerry Petrick will call on over 100 of our leading traded sector firms in the microelectronics, diversified manufacturing, and professional services industries to identify opportunities to grow and to retain firms. Despite the recession, we are finding that firms continue to plan for growth and there are 'gazelles' in waiting. Access to capital is the #1 impediment to expansion and the region should see growth when the current liquidity crisis eases.

The CREDC is continuing to recruit both domestically and internationally. Renewable energy is an active sector. Southwest Washington is very attractive to this industry because of its infrastructure, skilled labor force, low operating costs, and

green street cred. We are traveling to both Asia and Europe to meet one-on-one with past and new prospects. Tight credit markets are having an impact on investment schedules, so this is both a short- and a long-term play. Domestically, we are prospecting for firms in the heavy metal, diversified manufacturing, and professional services sectors. And despite the economy, we are finding active cases looking to relocate to the region. The biggest impact of the recession is that decision timeframes are being stretched.

Last, the CREDC is committed to long-term policy initiatives that lay the foundation for fundamental change in the region's economy. We have introduced two pieces of incentive legislation in Olympia to give us financial tools to recruit the renewable energy manufacturing sector to the state. While we compete well in costs, skilled labor, and the supply chain, Washington has few incentives to be truly competitive for recruiting this industry. The CREDC's goal is to change that.

The CREDC is also lobbying to fund a branch of the Washington Technology Center, specifically a shared-user lab, to be located at Washington State University Vancouver. The lab would support the development of technologies and new company formation for the next generation of our technology economy.

One of the key partners of the CREDC in accomplishing our mission over the last 26 years has been the public and private sector planning profession. Your profession is either supporting our clients in executing their projects or laying the policy and land use framework for the region's growth. Planning, recruitment, and private investment are the three legs of the economic development stool that will create jobs for our region. The current recession should cause us to redouble our collective efforts.





# Growing your business at the Port of Camas-Washougal Industrial Park

David Ripp, Executive Director

With breathtaking views of the magnificent Mount Hood and the mighty Columbia River, Port of Camas-Washougal's 430-acre industrial park is home to over 40 diverse industrial companies, 150,000 square feet of warehouse space, over a thousand employees, and 120+ acres for future industrial expansion.

Together, these Port tenants are the key to the Port's mission of economic development by generating hundreds of local jobs, over \$30 million in payroll, and contribute to taxes that help pay for public services such as roads, schools, and police and fire protection.

These heavy and light industrial activities encompass a diverse range such as plastics and piping, metal fabricating, wood treating, fiberglass products, water treatment, pulp and paper, nutritional products, and synthetic crystals.

With convenient access to major highways, air, and rail transportation, it's one of the few light industrial parks in the area, filling an important need for a range of large and small companies.

Known for being incubator-friendly to fledgling companies, the Port has seen a number of tenants expand and flourish, which in turn help grow jobs in Southwest Washington.

The Port currently operates at over 90 percent occupancy. It typically can provide build-to-suit options for lease or sale. With over 120 acres for future development, the Port offers tenants room to grow and ensures a strong economic industrial base.

In addition, the Port also promotes recreational opportunities from the bustle of one of Columbia River's largest marinas to Grove Field airport to three beautiful waterfront parks. Each focal point reflects the Port's commitment to make Camas-Washougal a better place to live, work and play.

## Future Industrial Expansion

A Master Development Plan is underway for the 122-acre East Industrial Park. The Master Development Plan seeks to maximize the economic potential of the property and establish future phases of development, while maintaining the flexibility needed to meet the demands of a dynamic market.

## East Industrial Park:

### Land zoning

- Varies from Heavy Industrial to Parks/Open Space
- Majority of the land is zoned Heavy Industrial
- About 29 acres is zoned Industrial
- About 15 acres is designated Parks/Open Space

### Considerations for future land use include:

- Type and diversification of industry
- Employment potential
- Level of capitalization
- Environmental responsibility
- Added value for the community

## Port of Camas-Washougal Industrial Park At A Glance

### 430 acres of Port industrial property

- 310 acres of existing industrial park
- 120+ acres for future industrial expansion
- 11 Port-owned buildings
- Over 150,000 square feet of industrial space

### Conveniently located at the crossroads of:

- Interstate 205 going north & south
- Highway 14 heading east & west
- Rail served by major railroad companies
- Minutes from local Grove Field Airport & Portland International Airport

### Master planned subdivision with utilities:

- Road, water & sewer
- Heavy power
- Land for lease and/or sale
- Build-to-suit

### Industrial Economic Impacts:

- Home to 40+ businesses
- Over 1,100 employees on port property
- Some \$30 million injected in local economy

# Revamping Downtown Woodland

*By Kei Zushi, Community Development Planner, City of Woodland*

One of Woodland's recent economic development efforts has focused on the historic downtown area—more specifically, the gateway and downtown areas (between west of exit 21 from I-5 to the BNSF Railway track). A Wal-Mart slated to open near exit 22 in mid-2010 could possibly compete with some of the downtown businesses, so revamping downtown is time-sensitive. The City of Woodland Planning Commission, City Council, and staff have been discussing ways to bring more businesses to the downtown area while retaining the existing businesses. The objective is to develop a desirable mixed-use area that has a sense of place. The project is critical for a second reason: it would determine how the area will look over the next couple of decades.

Although mixed-used developments have long been permitted and commercial parking requirements were lifted 2 years ago, the downtown area has not seen much recent development activity. Therefore, devising development incentives that the City can provide to developers and property owners is the most critical item. Bonus density is one of the incentives that has been discussed. Under bonus density provisions, in exchange for being permitted to develop to higher residential densities than allowed in the density standards, the developers would be obligated to provide “above-par” development elements in terms of landscaping/screening, public parks, open space, rooftop landscaping, greywater usage for irrigation, solar panels, affordable housing, LEED-certified/equivalent buildings, etc. This would not only encourage developments but create a win-win situation for the developers and City.

Expedited land use review processes is another incentive that has been discussed. This would help ensure that sensitive development approval timelines are followed by prioritizing downtown projects over pending development proposals for areas outside the downtown area. Lastly, a longer-term economic incentive that has been under consideration is

improving/replacing the aged sanitary sewer mains in the downtown area, utilizing the Local Infrastructure Financing Tool (LIFT) program. This would show the City's strong positive economic and political commitment to this area.

Downtown Woodland is very fortunate to have a fine grid street pattern to support the future pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly downtown. It also already has assets that can help develop a desirable mixed-use area: the Hulda Klager Lilac Gardens, Woodland Library, Woodland schools (primary, middle, and high), Horseshoe Lake Park with a skate park, the soon-to-be-renovated public bathroom at the Hoffman Plaza, a park-and-ride, and several historic buildings. In addition, a weekly farmer's market has been proposed around City Hall. A walking path that would connect the Hoffman Plaza and the skate park has also been proposed.

The development standards that have been proposed for mixed use would include a number of New Urbanistic elements, performance-based standards, and architectural guidelines that would reflect historic images of Woodland (i.e., forest industry, agriculture, and natural beauty). A design review committee with a qualified historic preservation / urban designer may be established to review all development proposals. Strong support has been shown by the Downtown Woodland Revitalization Committee, the Woodland Chamber of Commerce, and many local property owners and stakeholders. The City is trying to adopt the development incentives and mixed-use development standards by the time the economy improves substantially.



## Economic Development and the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad

*Fred Abraham, Railroad Coordinator, Clark County*

Clark County has owned the 33-mile Chelatchie Prairie Railroad since 1984 and has had a long-term contract since 2004 with a very active rail operator, Columbia Basin Railroad, which has grown the freight business almost ten-fold from 60 cars in 2004 to nearly 600 in 2008. With a ninth shipper to be added in 2009, this number is anticipated to increase over the next year by an additional 700 cars.

The Clark County Board of County Commissioners has labeled this asset a vital piece of economic development for the county. The Board has set aside approximately 1,500 acres along the rail corridor from Rye Junction to Chelatchie Prairie for light and heavy industrial development and is considering a new designation, railroad industrial development.

Railroads built this nation and continue to be valuable economically and for environmental preservation. Today's modern rail industry shipper provides family-wage jobs and this is a big reason for locating more businesses that use rail cars here.

Recently, outreach began to the metro development community, jurisdictional partners along the rail line, and state and federal legislators to heighten the awareness of the potential of a truly green rail industry—green because each rail car of freight moved replaces three trucks. Railcars use only a single gallon of diesel to move 1 ton of freight 400 miles, reducing the carbon footprint significantly. Rail lines also impact less surface area than roads and, unlike roads, are pervious surfaces.