



OREGON MARITIME MUSEUM

Officers

Arlen Cole, *President*
Susan Spitzer,
Second Vice President, Membership
Dan Butler, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Board of Trustees

Capt. Dick Ackroyd
Katin Imes
Dave Larson
Gil MacGregor
Doug Parks
Dan Pippenger
Marc Schwartz
Capt. Jim Townley, Jr.
Liz Wainwright
Ed Wilson, Librarian
Bob Woolsey, *Curator*
Dan Yates
Ron Youngman
*Vessels Operations &
Maintenance*

Honorary Trustees

Art Riedel
Capt. Jack Taylor

Staff

Virginia Durost,
Bookkeeper
Penny Mery,
Museum Store Administrator

Administrative Offices & Library

115 SW Ash Street
Suite 400C
Portland OR 97204
503.224.7724
oregonmaritimemuseum.org
info@oregonmaritimemuseum.org

Visit us aboard the Historic Steam Sternwheeler PORTLAND

Wed, Fri, Sat 11am-4pm
503.224.0054

The PORTLAND is
Docked on the Willamette River
At foot of Pine St & Naito Parkway
GPS: 198 SW Naito Parkway
Lat 45.520182
Long 122.669748

September 30 2014 – by email to: psc@portlandoregon.gov

To: City of Portland
Bureau of Planning & Sustainability

I have attended several hearings and events held in preparation of the West Quadrant Plan Proposed Draft of August 2014. As a board member of the Oregon Maritime Museum (OMM), I am pleased to have the opportunity to submit these comments in writing for inclusion in the public comment section of the draft plan.

Given my affiliation, I can't help but focus my comments on the sections of the plan that relate to the waterfront and its future. Looking over the plan, I find that it is a bit light on specifics for the waterfront. To wit:

Page vi - "...envisions a 21st century urban riverfront..."

Page 20 - "...most of downtown's activity is away from the waterfront..."

Page 23 - Embrace the Waterfront – four paragraphs that recognize a need to "...draw people toward the river..."

Page 46 - "...improve opportunities for and promote river transportation to and within the Central City..."

Page 60 - "...Increase the attractiveness of the riverfront as a tourist destination by encouraging ...,water transport and recreational opportunities..." And "...(P)rovide opportunities and amenities for river tours, water transit..."

On the positive side, there are some optimistic references:

Page 59 - "...Enhance the unique concentration of arts and cultural institutions and activities on and near the South Park Blocks..."

(C)reate unique cultural and historic attractions along the Willamette River..", and ..." (E)nhance the Downtown's and Willamette River's role in creating a positive image for the city, region and state..."

Page 69 – Implementation Action, UD3 – "... Review and update the Waterfront Park Master Plan to enhance activities, amenities, and open spaces in the park and into the river..."

Page 118 – Implementation Actions – Old Town China Town Urban Design - ..."Improve and enhance boater access to/from the Willamette River and Waterfront Park by improving Ankeny Dock or possibly moving it to a nearby location and reactivating it for commercial, transportation and recreational use.

So, what do these references tell me about the emphasis that the Central City 2035 Plan is likely to give to the Willamette River and future development on the river? Unfortunately, I feel there is not enough said.

Other cities in the United States celebrate their waterfronts by acknowledging their maritime history and building in landmark waterfront developments. In 1980 the City of Baltimore inaugurated a waterfront development that includes an aquarium, water taxis, food purveyors, and historic vessels. In San Diego, a collection of restored vessels includes sailing ships, two submarines, and an aircraft carrier. In the relatively small town of Marietta Ohio, population 14027 (2012), a festival of sternwheel boats celebrated its 39th annual event just a few weeks ago; this weekend typically attracts 100,000 visitors to the downtown waterfront. Following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the Bay Area of San Francisco instituted a temporary water taxi service that became a permanent supplement to the nexus of transportation modes in that region. The Wooden Boat Festival in Port Townsend WA has an international reputation and attracts crafts people, boaters, and visitors to a small town which knows how to celebrate its waterfront.

Portland, Oregon, has one waterfront cultural attraction whose mission is to recognize the Willamette River and its rich maritime history: the Oregon Maritime Museum, incorporated in 1981. OMM's largest asset, the Steamer PORTLAND, has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1997, and is thus a cultural attraction in its own right. The steam tug has a direct connection to the region – it was built by a local ship builder, owned by the Port of Portland, and operated on the Willamette River until its retirement. OMM uses the steamer to display part of its collection of historic elements of the region's waterfront history: Here, the public will discover that Portland has a rich shipbuilding history – and learn that a barge building industry thrives today. Here, the public learns about river transportation – from sail to steam to modern day. Here, you can learn why the Battleship OREGON has more than a namesake connection to the region. This museum is a cultural resource for researchers and educators, and it is an attraction for visitors from all over the world.

In addition to OMM, there are a half dozen or so other river- or maritime-related nonprofits: Save the PT Boat, Inc; the LCI restoration group, Wind and Oar Sailing School, RiversWest Small Craft Center, and a group supporting water taxis - to name a few. Each of these groups brings together communities of people who want to connect to the river, through teaching skills, sponsoring a wooden boat show, or entertaining military veterans - but only OMM has a daily presence on the Willamette River.

No festival on Tom McCall Waterfront Park celebrates the river's maritime riches. Lockfest, in Oregon City, is a growing event. Recent activities by the Human Access Project have generated more interest in the river's access and water quality, and they greatly enrich our perspective of the river itself. But a maritime heritage festival held in Portland in 2006 that featured antique classic boats, booths from small boat modelers and other museums, and welcomed visitors to the River Place area, was poorly attended and never resumed. In general, events like the Rose Festival, Cinco de Mayo, and the Brewer's Festival occupy major parts of Waterfront Park but do not connect with the river, and they make entrance to the Steamer PORTLAND awkward at best.

The City of Portland has failed to so much as recognize its namesake symbol of the waterfront, fails to support its activities, and it fails to acknowledge that numerous other groups work every day to preserve the area's maritime heritage. These groups embrace the waterfront. The West Quadrant Plan simply does not recognize these groups, and it makes no room for them on the waterfront.

Maritime history groups will manage to thrive, as they currently network and seek ways to find a center for sharing the stories of Portland's waterfront. Certain waterfront sites, from Centennial Mills to the South Waterfront exist on the West Side. There are other options on the East Side. Long term efforts are just beginning to determine the availability and feasibility of various sites – on the river – where maritime history can be represented by a collection of historic vessels, world-class land based museum facilities, and public spaces that, as your own documents say” “create unique cultural and historic attractions along the Willamette River”

I challenge the City to adopt a Central City plan that is excited about the waterfront and is willing to take chances to bring residents and tourists to the river. Consider the impact of the Columbia River Maritime Museum on Astoria. That museum is the largest cultural attraction in a smaller community, but it alone garnered 100,000 visitors in 2013. Maritime heritage draws people to the Astoria waterfront, and the City of Astoria is a huge booster.

Portland is not just the Rose City, nor is it just The City That Works. It is a River City. It is long past time to make long term plans with that emphasis.

One final observation. Early in the hearing process, one of the attendees commented that there is not a single sign on a single bridge in Portland that names the river these bridges cross. We do not inform or connect drivers to the river they see; many think they are on the Columbia River. Of all the things that Portlanders celebrate –brewpubs; gastronomic delights from VooDoo Donuts to Le Petit Oiseau; the Pearl; the health sciences region; and a recent a new listing as a sustainable city – we do not even formally acknowledge that the Willamette River is part of the city. Certainly, this oversight doesn't need to wait to 2035 to be resolved!

Susan E Spitzer
Second Vice President
Oregon Maritime