



Pilot Project Profile: Astoria, Oregon



History and Background

The City of Astoria is located in Clatsop County in the northwestern corner of Oregon, situated on the shores of Young's Bay and the Columbia River, just seven miles from the Pacific Ocean. The City has a population of approximately 10,000 and is 11.4 square miles, only half of which is land area, the remainder over water. The Columbia River estuary historically was the main employment center for the city, providing jobs associated with the fishing and timber industries as well as the U S Navy and Coast Guard. Today, resulting from the collapse of the natural resource economy, Astoria's economy has shifted towards the service and tourism industries. Redevelopment in the downtown core and waterfront areas has begun with the approval of and luxury condominiums and town-home projects to the land formerly devoted to canneries and net lofts along the banks of the Columbia River.

Shifting Sands Dynamic

Astoria's "shifting sands" dynamic is characterized by real estate appreciation, redevelopment of existing buildings, new development activity, and changing demographics which have begun to outpace the community's comfort level. Vulnerable populations include: traditional blue-collar families threatened by social displacement as tourism replaces the historical economy based on natural resources; low income families who are being displaced by rising home prices and rents; immigrant families who are segregated and existing on the margins of civic life; and small business entrepreneurs being challenged by both big box retailers scheduled to open 5 miles away in adjacent Warrenton and new land uses along the waterfront.

A Waterfront Vision Plan is being developed to address issues surrounding the physical identity of the Columbia River waterfront. The plan engages all Astorians in talking about the waterfront through multiple forums that are held to gather input from citizens and provide an open conversation. Following the completion of the Vision process, the City's current Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Map, and Development Code will need to be evaluated and updated. HD-OD can be instrumental in broadening the scope of the planning process and directly linking the Vision Plan to long-time residents and their personal goals.

