

# City of St. Helens Central Waterfront

## Project update – Preliminary Phase I Site Characterization



### Spring 2020

The City of St. Helens has been studying how best to use its waterfront property along the Columbia River and Multnomah Channel to **benefit our residents and businesses through redevelopment, job creation, and recreation**. By engaging our community in discussions, public events, and visioning processes over the last few years, we have heard lots of great ideas for future uses of the property. These include sports facilities, beach access, and other uses. In 2019 we began investigating the property in greater detail to assess whether it can be developed in a **safe and environmentally sound manner**. This initial investigation is called the **Phase I Site Characterization**.



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### Current project activities

Our consultant, Maul Foster & Alongi, Inc., is working with us and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to determine whether we can meet all regulatory requirements to prepare the property for redevelopment. Engineers and geologists recently completed a **preliminary report** on the findings of the Phase I Site Characterization that helps us take the first step toward understanding the property and applying for DEQ permits.

The report describes the property and the surrounding vicinity, including natural and historical resources; water resources; water rights; property ownership; climate; geology; and hydrogeology. It essentially provides details about the property to inform the City, our community, and DEQ as we consider options for redevelopment. It also helps inform potential design of projects that would get the property ready to be developed, and any projects that would occur on the property to create **a sustainable community waterfront**.

### What we learned

The major takeaways from this report are:

- The depth of the basalt bedrock underneath the property varies widely, from ground surface to over 200 feet in some places.
- The interflow zone – that's the area where groundwater flows between basalt formations that make up the bedrock – is well below the existing wastewater lagoon. This is good news; it means it's easier to fill the lagoon safely if a project were to move forward.
- It may be necessary to expand the existing dike to allow for future development of the site.

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Though this report is quite detailed, it doesn't draw any conclusions about these takeaways, nor does it tell us whether we should or should not move forward with a waterfront project. And that's okay, because we have a lot of additional research and regulatory processes to undertake before we can get to a project. What this report does provide is a foundation for continued investigation into the **safety, environmental soundness, and economic viability of redevelopment.**

### Next steps

We're sharing information with our community as part of our continued dedication to **communication and transparency** around waterfront redevelopment and the City's work in general. We'll continue to share and solicit feedback while determining whether to proceed with a project.



*2016 waterfront open house*

If we, as a community, decide to continue moving forward with a waterfront project, next steps include answering remaining questions regarding safety for people and the environment. We also need to look further into financial viability. If these questions are answered to the satisfaction of the City and community, we will proceed to **preliminary design and site development planning**, which will take approximately 18 to 24 months. If we started this work in 2020, we'd aim for conditional approval from DEQ in 2022. At that point, the property would be ready, from a regulatory standpoint, to move into the final stages of planning and design.

Early steps in redevelopment might not seem very exciting—we're talking utilities, roads, and other infrastructure needed to support a future community waterfront. Construction on vertical structures is likely several years out and depends on many factors between now and then, including **your continued input.**

### Stay involved

We encourage you to remain involved in this project and provide your thoughts and comments throughout. More information is available at [www.ci.st-helens.or.us/waterfront](http://www.ci.st-helens.or.us/waterfront). You can also **reach us directly** at 503-397-6272 or visit us at City Hall, located at 265 Strand Street.

Your St. Helens City Council meets on the **first and third Wednesdays of each month** at 1 and 7 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall. These meetings are regular opportunities to hear the latest on City projects and initiatives and provide public comment. You can also check our [online calendar](#) to see all Council sessions and other City events.