

# Port of Portland drops plan to develop West Hayden Island

In a move that strikes an economic blow to the Portland metro area, the Port of Portland on Jan. 8 withdrew its request for Portland to annex West Hayden Island.

The Port had planned to develop 300 of the site's 814 acres into a deep water marine terminal, creating thousands of family-wage jobs. The remaining acreage was to be set aside for habitat restoration and recreational amenities.

The island, which the Port obtained in 1994 from PGE, is located on the Columbia River just west of the Interstate 5 bridge in unincorporated Multnomah County. The island was brought into the Metro urban growth boundary in 1983 with the intention of building a large cargo facility.

Annexation and development was supported by the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council, the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Environmental groups such as the Audubon Society oppose development. They successfully blocked annexation for industrial development in 1999.

"Where the f@#% are they going to come up with 300 to 400 acres of ready industrial land?" asked John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon Building and Construction Trades Council. "And you can print that."

Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt said the project lacked support at Portland City Hall.

"The terms under which annexation



has been proposed by the city would simply render a future development on the property impossible," Wyatt said in a press release. "We understand from the mayor that Portland City Council is unwilling to take action to modify these proposals at this time, so we cannot justify the investment of more time and money into the process."

Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO and a governor-appointed Port commissioner, blamed the city for the breakdown.

In a guest column for the Oregonian newspaper, Chamberlain wrote:

"I, along with others watching this process, began to wonder if the city's goal was not development but the ability to maintain land in industrial reserves that they knew would never be

developed," he wrote.

"Now, our city leaders must face up to the consequences of preventing the creation of good jobs on West Hayden Island. They must explain to out-of-work Portlanders how we are going to create the good jobs we need to provide a strong base for a growing region.

"Mayor Charlie Hales talks a lot about livability. A good job is the first step to creating a livable community."

In the column Chamberlain pointed out that the Metro region has only seven sites available for industrial development that are over 100 acres. Most of the sites include significant challenges before they would be ready for industrial development, including expensive brownfield cleanup, lack of access to roads and utilities, and the ag-

gregation of parcels under multiple ownerships.

"West Hayden Island would have been one of the most usable parcels of its size in our region once annexed by the city of Portland. It was uniquely valuable as the only option available to expand Oregon's grain exports and give Oregon businesses another option to grow their exports. Without this land we don't have another place to expand our Portland port facilities," he wrote.

Chamberlain said that without growth in its industrial base, Oregon will continue to fall harder, and recover more slowly, with each recession.

"Portland's economy continues to depend on service-sector jobs, which don't attract the outside capital or pay the high wages that we need to create a strong base for our local economy," he wrote.

The City of Portland has been conducting a public process to explore annexation and creation of a long-range land-use plan for West Hayden Island since 2009.

In July 2013, the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission voted 7-3 in favor of annexing West Hayden Island into the City. Their recommendation reportedly would have added \$30 million to \$40 million in costs to mitigate environmental damage.

Hyatt said that while the Port was agreeable to mitigation exceeding state and federal requirements, the City's proposed annexation terms simply made the 300 acres unviable in the mar-

ketplace.

"This is a disappointing and unfortunate outcome on several levels, including lost economic opportunity for our region, implications for current and future land use planning, and lost social and environmental benefits," Wyatt said in the press release. "Despite this action, I believe that West Hayden Island remains viable for the future as an ideal place to grow the city's tax base and family jobs while providing space for public recreation and wildlife habitat."

Mayor Hales' office told Willamette Week the mayor doesn't want to see West Hayden Island annexation revisited any time soon.

"He does not," Dana Haynes, the mayor's spokesperson, told WW. "The proposal meant hundreds of jobs, many years in the future ... West Hayden Island was a spot, but not the spot, for job growth in the city."

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