

# Senior center: The total cost of the project was roughly \$1.7 million

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Before the makeover, "it was a very deplorable building," Project Director Al Jaques said. The center's interior mainly consisted of a large open space with a small craft area. The heating and electric systems were ineffective, and there wasn't a separate area to treat members dealing with medical conditions.

In addition to the dance hall and pool room, seniors can now enjoy a craft room, a well-furnished reception area and more natural light. The remodel also comes with a classroom for ENCORE (Exploring New Concepts in Retirement Education) classes, a health room (complete with a hospital bed), new bathrooms and a full commercial kitchen, where the nonprofit Columbia Senior Diners will cook regularly, John Ryan, the center's board president, said.

All the old services and activities — crafts, card games, board games, billiards, mahjong, pinocle, shopping trips, exercise classes and bingo — remain on offer.

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Larry Miller  
executive director

**'Quite fabulous'**  
A nonprofit organization housed in a city-owned building, the senior center originally closed in January 2014, with the expectation that it would reopen the following August.

But it took longer than anticipated for the city to acquire the full grant money needed to pay for the project, which originally included renovations in the basement but was narrowed to a ground-floor upgrade.

Construction finally got underway last summer. The total cost of the project was roughly \$1.7 million; additional fundraising paid for such amenities as a high-definition TV and furniture for the reception room.

Meanwhile, the center operated out of the Yacht Club on West Marine Drive, a location that for some seniors is rather out of the way.

Over the last two years, the center lost about 100 members, bringing the total down to just over 400, Miller said.

"We lost them because of the fact that it's difficult for people who live in downtown Astoria, that do not have automobiles, to go to the old Yacht Club," he said. "Most seniors can't afford to take a taxi wherever want to they go."

"Some people find change difficult, too," he added. "I know a lot of folks didn't come because they were upset that we had left here."

Now that the long-awaited rehab is complete, a number of former members have rejoined the center, Miller said.

"Honestly, with the building the way it is, and being back in town, I'm sure our numbers are going to grow real fast," he said.

Rolls will even include people who weren't senior center members when it occupied the building last time.

Ron Danen, of Astoria, took a tour of the site as the construction team was still remodeling it and now plans to show up with his wife, Chong, quite often.

Thumbing through a National Geographic in the reception area, Danen took a look around and said, "It seems to be quite fabulous."



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian  
The new Astoria Senior Center sign glows neon on a recent morning as construction on the center nears completion.

# Department of State Lands comes to Astoria

The Daily Astorian

The Oregon Department of State Lands will hold a public meeting tonight regarding waterways, including historically filled lands, waterway leasing, navigational access maintenance dredging and ocean renewable energy.

The meeting is scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Judge Guy Boyington Building, 857 Commercial St., in Astoria. State staff will provide information and answer questions.

Late last month, the department extended the deadline for comments on rulemaking surrounding historically filled lands from

Dec. 31 to Sunday after concerns about a lack of notice.

Chris Castelli, a policy analyst for the department, said attendees at hearings in Astoria and Coos Bay expressed the need for more time to consider the proposed addition of a new administrative rule division covering historically filled lands.

A new state law distinguishes historically filled lands and new lands for purposes of determining ownership and transfer of ownership of lands created upon submersible or submerged lands by artificial fill or deposit.

Historically filled lands are defined by the state as

land created by placement of artificial fill or deposit atop state-owned submerged or submersible land prior to May 28, 1963. The department convened an advisory group representing broad interests to recommend changes and streamline efforts for how the agency handles clarifying ownership of such lands.

The law establishes a process for the State Land Board to identify and declare the state's interest in historically filled lands and to provide notice of declaration. It directs the Department of State Lands to provide a progress report to the Legislature on or before Sept. 15, 2017, and appropriates \$328,228 from the state's

general fund to create two positions.

The Department of State Lands administers natural and fiscal resources such as state-owned rangelands and timberlands, waterway leases, estates for which no will or heirs exist and unclaimed property. Twice a year, the agency distributes fund investment earnings to generate revenue for the Common School Fund. The agency also administers the state's removal-fill law, which requires people removing or filling certain amounts of material in waters of the state to obtain a permit.

All rulemaking information is available at [www.oregon-statelands.us](http://www.oregon-statelands.us)



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