

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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Time to finish Riverfront vision

Up and down cycles in development are familiar to all who have lived for any length of time on the North Coast and vicinity. Knowledge that upward trends in real estate eventually lose momentum is a perennial factor that discourages long-term planning.

There is a tendency among elected officials, planners and the real estate industry to let development pressures run their course, secure in the belief that booms all too soon run their course.

Earlier this week, Astoria City Councilor Cindy Price warned that the city is flirting with loss of mutually treasured attributes unless it takes charge by fully implementing its Riverfront Vision Plan. She faced direct push back from Councilor Russ Warr, who sees the riverfront plan and similar efforts as getting in the way of needed development and associated employment. Other counselors didn't overtly side with either Price or Warr on the issue this week, but cited competing priorities for a finite amount of staff and council attention.

Looking at all that has changed in Astoria in the past decade, it can hardly be accurately argued that onerous restrictions have frozen development. In fact, completion and implementation of the riverfront plan might expedite future development by providing clearcut procedures and expectations for future downtown development.

Uncertainty is always a bigger enemy to development than simply having understandable rules to follow. Far from being anti-zoning, most real-estate professionals regard such

rules as essential in providing prospective investors with an assurance they will not have views blocked, neighborhood values degraded or detracting changes of use allowed nearby.

Still awakening from a protracted slumber, Astoria is a place that stands on the threshold of change. We are inundated with positive publicity. Oregonians know many examples of cities that have previously undergone rapid surges in popularity and development. Places like Bend have been transformed, not in every way for the better. Astoria has the advantage of witnessing these nearby real-life case studies. These can perhaps teach us how to allow development that adds to livability and a healthy economy, while avoiding blocking off our waterfront, pricing-out long-term residents or creating gridlock on our streets.

Cursory study of a map reveals Astoria is a small peninsula surrounded by water and forest. If we choose to, its scale will allow us to control our destiny to a much better extent than would be possible of an unbounded city. Its size also means that any mistakes we make or allow will be with us, up close and personal, for many years to come.

The Riverfront Vision Plan deserves wide discussion, support and implementation.

Award honors one of Astoria's best values

Historic preservation is one of Astoria's best values. For 29 years, the Astoria City Council has recognized those who toil and spend to restore significant properties. First given in 1987, the Dr. Edward Harvey Award is a window on one of the town's most significant impulses.

Harvey pioneered in marking the town's significant homes. Some of his historic house markers remain visible.

Last Monday, the council gave the Harvey Award to Laura A. Rogers for her work on the Andrew Young House in Uppertown. Andrew and his brother, Benjamin, arrived from Sweden in 1874. In the following year, Andrew built

the home Ms. Rogers now occupies. Benjamin subsequently built a larger, nearby home, which has become a bed and breakfast.

The honored Young Home is one of the older houses in Uppertown. In the style of Gothic Revival It is an intact example of a kind of vernacular house that was once common in the area. Vernacular refers to a low style, done without pretense. The home's relationship to the early salmon canning industry also makes it significant.

Here's to Laura Rogers, to all those who came before her and those who will follow her in restoring Astoria's architectural heritage.

GUEST COLUMN

Lessons for beating the learning gap

By U.S. Sen. RON WYDEN
 For The Daily Astorian

With the school year nearing its end, students and families all over Oregon are beginning to think about the upcoming summer and their time outside of school.

I want to take a moment to stress the importance of providing young people with safe places to learn during the summer months, because not all Oregon families can afford summer camps and summer tutors.

This is especially important because increased evidence shows that students who experience summer learning loss start the school year behind. Simply put, the long summer break should not be a long break from learning.

With Oregon's four-year high school graduation rate at an alarmingly low 74 percent, it is long past time we shine a spotlight on summer learning loss and its impact on our students' path toward graduation. That's especially important in our state where 1 in 4 teenagers doesn't make it to graduation.

Most students lose math and reading skills during summer break, as research by the National Summer Learning Association shows. Students from low-income families fare even worse. The sad truth is that the lack of access to learning programs for underprivileged kids in the summer widens the achievement gap between those students and their higher-income classmates. Most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in math computation skills over the summer months, and

low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement.

As parents, community leaders, educators and policymakers, we must provide every resource possible to bridge that gap for disadvantaged and low-income students. I have long fought to close the achievement gap and support all students on a path toward high school graduation and beyond. In the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act, I ensured the bill requires that states improve student learning at low-performing schools and at schools with low-performing student groups. Now, the state of Oregon can provide federal funding to school districts to hire mentor-teachers or create afterschool and summer learning programs to support underperforming schools and struggling students.

I know so many great education advocates in Oregon who share these goals, and I want to commend Oregon's tremendous educators who work on this effort every single day. My good friends at Oregon Afterschool for Kids have made a commitment to keep kids learning all summer long. Their efforts to open up school libraries and school cafeterias in Woodburn, Salem, Eugene and around the state have truly made a difference in children's lives by providing them with a safe and welcoming learning environment during the summer. I saw parents bring their



U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden

The long summer break should not be a long break from learning.

children for a free lunch, and stay for the free books. This year I hope to see even more communities come out and support our students by hosting summer learning activities. Summer Learning Day is July 14, so mark your calendars. Even if you cannot attend one of these great events to serve lunch and read stories to classrooms full of children, remember that supporting summer learning is easy. Volunteering your time, or donating books or crayons to neighbors is another way to support young learners.

As I have traveled around the state having conversations in high school auditoriums and school gyms, I have heard so many good ideas on how to help students succeed in school. Oregonians agree that we must support all aspects of a student's life to improve their outcomes, and I will add that this rings true all year long. I have seen firsthand that our communities are ready to come together and support students who need it. This is truly the Oregon way.

I am committed to helping more of our students get their high school diplomas and increase the rate at which our students are graduating from high school. Fighting summer learning loss is one way we can keep all students on a path toward a bright future.

Democrat Ron Wyden is the senior U.S. senator for Oregon.

GUEST COLUMN

Kids are a worthwhile investment

By MAX WILLIAMS
 For The Daily Astorian

We shouldn't be pointing fingers; we should be offering helping hands.

This was the theme when *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof spoke recently at The Oregon Community Foundation annual meeting.

He was there to educate, support and inspire us to do better in our efforts to give all Oregon children the opportunity to succeed in school and, ultimately, in life.

Although our state has many accomplishments, our performance in educational outcomes is considerably below our aspirations. Many Oregon children lack the opportunities that lead to economic prosperity — and subsequently diminish our overall state economic and social health as well.

At the foundation, we strive to tackle these issues with grant programs and partnerships that target education, parenting, children's dental health, and the economic strength of communities. We focus on early childhood education — including parenting — because that's where we can make the biggest impact.

Because brain architecture is 90 percent complete by age 6, parents play a deeply influential role in early childhood development. By age 3, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers have vocabularies two to three times greater than those whose parents did not complete high school. By the time they start school, children who have limited exposure to vocabulary

are already behind their peers. Many never catch up.

Our concern at OCF is that this opportunity gap for children and youth is widening. We know that effective parenting and early childhood reading and vocabulary have a huge impact on preparing children for kindergarten — and that readiness affects their ability to succeed later in life.

Here's where the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative comes in. A partnership between four of Oregon's largest foundations (OCF, The Ford Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust and The Collins Foundation) and Oregon State University, the collaborative supports parenting education programs.

These combined efforts have also resulted in the development of regional "hubs" to coordinate resources and make parenting education easily accessible. These hubs now operate in 29 counties, including Clatsop, with the goal of covering every county in the state within a few years. In Astoria, the Clatsop County Juvenile Department has just received a \$90,000 grant from the foundation to support Northwest Parenting, providing coordination and delivery of parenting education programs in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties.

Beyond social equity concerns



Max Williams

Oregon is poised to play an important role in the early childhood education discussion.

there are also economic issues at play. Economists who have looked at the cost-benefit equation say that dollars spent in the early years pay off many times over. We can save anywhere from \$3 to \$17 for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs because of lower costs for remedial education, lower crime and incarceration costs and higher productivity over a lifetime.

The bottom line: Kids are a worthwhile public investment. Oregon is poised to play an important role in the early childhood education discussion.

In 2015, the Oregon Legislature enacted House Bill 3380, which created a new, publicly funded preschool system. Called Preschool Promise, the system leverages high-quality, local and culturally relevant early child care and education programs, allowing families with incomes up to 200 percent of the poverty level to access and choose the preschool program which best meets their needs.

Providing equal access at the starting line is exactly what we need to do. It is ultimately only by closing what Kristof calls our "collective effort gap" that Oregon can — and will — be better than it is today. And by not pointing fingers, but by offering helping hands.

Max Williams, president and CEO of The Oregon Community Foundation.

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