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## Astoria could see denser development downtown

A move toward greater flexibility

By EDWARD STRATTON  
*The Astorian*

The Astoria Planning Commission on Tuesday warmed to taller buildings and more development along the downtown waterfront, including new hotels over water in existing buildings.

The Urban Core, which includes downtown and waterfront properties between Second and 16th streets, is the last of four sections of the city's Riverfront Vision Plan guiding development along the Columbia River. The City Council has approved new development rules for Bridge Vista in Uniontown, the Civic Greenway east of downtown and the Neighborhood Greenway in Alderbrook.

The outline for Urban Core anticipates a mix of commercial, residential and water-dependent uses with denser development and a preservation of river views. Some of the more controversial recommendations included prohibitions on certain uses over water, such as new hotels, homes and medical and professional offices.

The proposed prohibition on hotels came in part from criticism over the four-story Marriott Fairfield Inn & Suites franchise approved by the City Council last year at the former Ship Inn restaurant. The approval sparked a review of development codes in the Bridge Vista section of the Riverfront Vision Plan to protect the public's views along the waterfront, seen as the city's most desirable commercial land.

But planning commissioners largely agreed that downtown was meant for denser development and fewer restrictions.

"Looking at some of the numbers we put on things (downtown), I think it really was in response to this kind of concern about what we lost in Bridge Vista," Commissioner Jennifer Cameron-Lattek said. "And if we don't have that concern anymore, do we feel differently about the height restrictions in the Urban Core area? Because if we do ... this is where we should have a little more density and development."

Much of the backlash to hotels has focused on chains like Marriott and the belief Astoria might be approaching too many rooms. The City Council raised the possibility of banning chain hotels and will discuss the issue in January. Rosemary Johnson and Matt Hastie, planning consultants for the city, said parking requirements would be a natural limiting factor on allowable hotels downtown.

The Bowline Hotel under construction next to Buoy Beer Co. might have been the last approved hotel on the downtown waterfront. But planning commissioners reached a consensus that other new hotels should be allowed as a conditional use in existing buildings, which property owners should be allowed to expand within the city's height and mass restrictions.

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## Brownhill reflects on time as judge

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Circuit Court Judge Paula Brownhill will retire on Oct. 31.

## An advocate for children

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

Ten years ago, Judge Paula Brownhill met a 3-year-old boy who had come through the court system to be placed with foster parents.

His parents were engaged in drug use, criminal activity and violence. The judge said the boy had suffered a great deal of trauma and did not receive sufficient treatment.

He and his half-sister were initially placed together in foster care with a relative, but eventually, they were split up. Since then, the judge has watched the boy get placed in one home after another.

Although he is no longer in Clatsop County, Brownhill still keeps in touch with him. "He is a great kid, and he deserves a permanent home," she said.

Brownhill, 68, is most passionate about cases involving children. She has been an advocate for children since she began her career as a lawyer and has been recognized over the years for her efforts to improve court processes for children as a judge.

Chief Justice Wallace Carson named her the juvenile court champion in 2002 for raising the profile and priority of child abuse and neglect cases. She was honored again



Judge Paula Brownhill's engraved gavel sits on the bench in Courtroom 300.

in 2015 when Chief Justice Thomas Balmer presented her with a lifetime achievement award for her work with abused and neglected children.

Brownhill was appointed by Gov. Barbara Roberts to fill Judge Thomas Edison's position on the Clatsop County Circuit Court in 1994 and was elected four times.

After 25 years on the bench, the presiding judge will retire on Oct. 31. However, she won't be gone long.

Brownhill chose a retirement option that requires her to work 35 days a year for five years filling in for judges around the state. She said the option allows her to stay up-to-date with changes to the law and gives her the opportunity to travel to new places.

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## Astoria approves Bridge Vista standards

Port objects to view corridors

By EDWARD STRATTON,  
*The Astorian*

The Astoria City Council on Monday unanimously approved development restrictions around the Astoria Bridge, declining the Port of Astoria's calls to hold off on preserving two view corridors in Uniontown that run through its property.

The Bridge Vista overlay zone is one of four sections in the city's Riverfront Vision Plan guiding development along the Columbia River. It covers properties between Portway and Second streets and reflects a desire to preserve the public's view of the bridge and the river through smaller buildings and other standards.

Bridge Vista has been under discussion for several years, with codes approved in 2015. But a new City Council started looking at amendments following criticism over the approval of a four-story Fairfield Inn & Suites at the former Ship Inn restaurant and amid mounting pressure against new hotels.

City councilors agreed last month on a set of restrictions for new buildings, including a 28-foot height limit with stepbacks for higher floors, or 35 feet if the developer grants public access. Each building would be limited to 30,000 square feet. Buildings would only be able to occupy half of a lot's area and would require a 60-foot view corridor to the river in between structures.

The Port and Fort George Brewery, the new owner of the Astoria Warehousing property, can apply with the City Council in the next five years for exceptions to the building restrictions by submitting master plans for their properties. The plan districts are a nod to the unique potential of the properties to attract industry, manufacturing and higher-paying jobs.

City councilors argued that the restrictions strike a balance between property owners' rights and a public desire to preserve river views. The council has increased allowable building size and height from what had initially been broached, while creating more restrictive rules than those approved in 2015, Mayor Bruce Jones said.

"I think it's a good compromise between citizens who are pushing for greater protection of the waterfront, and the property owners who are pushing to not have their rights restricted," he said.

A last-minute sticking point was the protection of two view corridors from the dead-end Bay and Basin streets in Uniontown to the river. Two business owners worried their views could be taken away by the development of a vacant piece of land at the end of Bay Street. The Port leases the lot to developer Mark Hollander, who is behind the Fairfield Inn and has sought to build multiple Marriott hotel franchises in Astoria.

Dirk Rohne, the president of the Port Commission, asked the City Council to approve Bridge Vista code amendments but set aside the view corridors, arguing they were last-minute additions that undercut the Port Commission's legitimacy to manage the agency's property.

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## City signs off on dock lease

Partnership with river cruise line

By EDWARD STRATTON  
*The Astorian*

The Astoria City Council on Monday approved a lease of the eastern end of the 17th Street Dock to American Cruise Lines.

The city leases moorage space to visiting river cruise boats on the eastern side of the dock behind the Columbia River Maritime Museum. The agreement lets city staff outsource scheduling of the ships and gives American Cruise

Lines, which comprises about two-thirds of ship calls, priority docking rights while making reasonable accommodations and setting rates for competitors.

In exchange, American Cruise Lines will pay the city \$80,000 a year for the first three years. Afterward, the city will receive \$80,000 a year plus \$500 for each vessel docking beyond 110 a year, with the figure increased annually by 2% or the last year's consumer price index.

Jeff Harrington, the city's public works director, has argued the agreement frees up city staff, allows for quicker repairs if any of the ailing mooring dolphins fail and provides an equivalent amount of revenue to what the city currently



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

American Cruise Lines will handle docking of river cruise and other ships at Astoria's 17th Street Dock.

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