



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Kirsten Norgaard and Jaz Carpenter recently opened Foragers, a collection of handmade artisans, in the Astoria Underground.

Foragers: 'We wanted it to feel like the forest floor'

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Jaz Carpenter, who founded Foragers with Kirsten Norgaard of Kit's Apothecary, started painting portraits of people as mushrooms as a quarantine hobby during the coronavirus pandemic. She and Norgaard, who creates CBD-infused products, thought of how to combine their passions and those of other artisans into a collective storefront.

The center suite of Astoria Underground played host to a teahouse and Floral Haze Vintage. With help from some friends, they transformed the space into a forest understory of deep green walls, earthy brown floor and bare wood displays.

"We wanted it to feel like the forest floor," Carpenter said. "We wanted it to be as much handmade as we could."

Foragers displays the custom woodworks of Mic Danielson at Norse-West Woodshop and artist Autumn Eve Montgomery Hurd, known for her work around queer representation, body positivity and female empowerment. The store also provides space for several handmade vendors, including Chef Daddy's seasoning salts, Forge & Farm's packs of dried wild mushrooms and other edibles and Cloudy Day Candle Co.

Foragers joins an eclectic collection of artisans popu-

lating the miniature village of the Astoria Underground, including Kit's Apothecary and Cascade Screen Printing. Pianist Bob Goldstick rents a studio where he broadcasts his performances on livestreaming platform Twitch. Sondra Carr, of Weird Sisters Freak Boutique, helped create a forested decor in the alleyway meandering around the underground.

Rob Collins, who ran Astoria Barber Co. next to Reveille Ciderworks until a business partner had a life change, was about to sign a lease in the Astoria Underground when the coronavirus pandemic shut down barbershops. After going into hibernation for several months, he signed on and said business, while not as good as on Duane Street, has been steady.

"It's been good," he said. "I love it here."

Business owners in the underground are hoping for a new proprietor to take over the now-vacant coffee stand at street level on Marine Drive. The stand acts as kind of an open sign drawing people to the staircase that leads down to the collection of businesses underneath.

But Carpenter said the hidden vibe fits well.

"I feel like that's Astoria's vibe," she said. "There's a lot of hidden gems you have to seek out. But once you find them, they're great."

Food hub: A purchase price of \$700,000

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to our mission, and just in general, importing our local food systems."

Jeff Graham joined Fort George as executive chef several years ago with a mission to make the brewery's menus more local. He sourced local chicken from Blackberry Bog Farms in Svensen and eventually connected with Gardner to source grass-fed beef from Tillamook County.

"He's driving it up in his truck," Graham said. "Once a week or twice — whenever I need it — we get a delivery. It's exciting to have this possibility to where it's going to be a couple blocks away, where the food will be stored."

Graham envisions taking beef and pork from Gardner and other producers and turning them into charcuterie and other value-added products mere blocks from the brewery.

"I then know where my product is coming from big time," Graham said. "He raised the animal. I made the pepperoni. And I'm going to put the pepperoni on this pizza. So kind of that symbiotic relationship between

the producer and the restaurant, that's superexciting for a chef."

Warren Neth, who markets for the food hub, worked for Slow Food Southwest Washington, a group supporting local agriculture on the north banks of the lower Columbia River.

"It was always very apparent to me that coastal southwest Washington is much more connected to Astoria than Vancouver, Longview, that kind of thing," Neth said. "So it will be great to have this food hub servicing those producers on the north side of the river."

Partners

The partners plan to acquire the Sears building for \$700,000 by the end of the month from Rick Fried and Thea Dyal, who operated the Sears Hometown store. They are using a commercial loan through Steward, a lender specializing in regenerative agriculture and food sustainability projects.

The loan allows individuals supportive of the food hub to donate, spreading out the indebtedness. Tre-Fin Day Boat Seafood, a hyperlocal catcher-processor in Ilwaco,



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Nehalem River Ranch owner Jared Gardner is a central partner to the food hub project.

Washington, and another partner in the food hub, is using the concept to raise money for a new production space. The food hub has already raised more than \$37,000 at astoriafoodhub.com to help with the purchase.

Corey Omei, the archi-

tect for the project, described the planned decor for the food hub as "contemporary reclaimed," using much of the existing Sears Hometown storefront while bringing in raw wood, reclaimed features, more natural lighting and energy efficiency upgrades.

The partners plan to restore the Mason-Ehrman sign and murals painted by Jo Lumpkin Brown on the back of the building, designed by famed local architect John Wicks and on the National Register of Historic Places.

The building includes an equally expansive basement, where future phases envision expanded dry and cold storage, a freight elevator and a ramp for bringing products up to the loading dock on the Riverwalk. The partners want to eventually start a restaurant overlooking the Columbia and serving local food.

"This food shed is historically probably the most important food shed in the whole region," Omei said. "And it's a great place to restart ... what was done in the past, and to think of the future, so we bring back good, local, healthy food in a way that is meaningful."

Gearhart: Negotiations will come down to trust

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for construction.

About 50% supported the High Point site, with an elevation of between 62 feet and 65 feet, as their No. 1 choice, followed by 38.4% who preferred the fire department's location on Pacific Way. The cinder block building, constructed in 1958, is considered a risk for flooding or collapse during an earthquake and tsunami.

Only 11.5% of respondents chose the Dune Meadows Park at Pacific Way and North Marion as their first choice.

In early 2020, city officials estimated construction cost at the High Point site between \$6 million and \$9 million.

The city may conduct another resident survey, Cockrum said.

"A re-survey is just to double-check with our voters that they still support this option," she said. "It has been several years since the council was given direction by the voters

to pursue a location outside the tsunami zone, but not at the Dune Meadows Park."

The High Point structure will also be used as an emergency operations center in a major weather or geological event, City Administrator Chad Sweet said. "It's more than just a fire station," he said.

In early 2020, city councilors unanimously approved a request for up to \$25,000 from the building reserve fund to coordinate work, review materials and prepare a cost estimate for a bond.

Officials had hoped to put a firehouse bond before voters last year, but delays in negotiations as a result of the coronavirus pandemic stalled discussions. Part of the ongoing delay includes discussions between the city and the Palisades Homeowners Association for an undeveloped right of way.

Talks have picked up, City Attorney Peter Watts said. He said he had been in con-

tact with John Crawford, the board president of the homeowners association.

"We've got a lot of community education that we will need to do so people understand the issue," Watts said. "I've been able to explain some of these concepts to him and gotten him up to speed and make sure his group receives accurate information. Hopefully, we have a plan they can get behind."

Crawford confirmed discussions with the city were ongoing. "It's at our board level and no decisions have been made," he said.

Watts said negotiations will come down to trust. "We're going to need them to trust us and we're going to need to trust them," he said. "Assuming we can get there, we'll have an outcome where we have a potentially great facility that will be attractive to current and future volunteers that is at a safe elevation so that in an event of a tsunami our first responders

can get there. I'm cautiously optimistic."

City staff will present the costs of property acquisition and building construction to the City Council at a work session on March 30, Sweet said.

After the council is presented with the information they may decide to move forward with a November election to approve the bond, ask for more information, or instruct staff to find an alternative to the High Point site.

Costs are being finalized, Sweet said.

Fire Chief Bill Eddy, who has guided the department as chief since 2000, watched a nearly \$4 million bond for a new fire station and city hall fail with voters in 2006. "The citizens of Gearhart are going to have to make that decision, what they feel is right, what their pocketbooks feel are right," he said. "Anything and everything is very possible. Something needs to be done. Gearhart has firefighters. They need a fire station."



Godogredo Vasquez/Albany Democrat-Herald
Kimber Parker takes part in the Oregon State University drama production of 'Miss Me, Kate' in 2016.

Parker: View from the new track is 'gorgeous'

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wanted to be a choir teacher."

Along the way, Parker sang at Oregon State University with Bella Voce in chamber choir. Parker taught men's choir for a term and was in opera and musical theater. She is active in music at her church.

While Parker was also working on her athletic career as a triathlete at Oregon State, she was well on her way down the music road.

Looking for work after graduating, a job interview for choir teacher brought Parker to Seaside.

"My husband and I saw that Seaside had a job opening," she said.

"We thought, 'Seaside's fun, let's just go for the interview and spend the day.' (Principal) Jeff Roberts offered me the job the next day. We thought about it, and decided it was the best move for us. Jeff was ultra helpful. He said he really wanted us as part of their school community. His coming to me and asking what we needed was so reassuring."

And now Parker teaches choir for both Seaside middle and high school students.

The choir numbers at the high school are smaller this year — 40 students, down from 65 — most likely because of more online schooling.

"We go back for in-person on March 16, but we won't be using our brand new choir room," Parker said, "so we'll be singing in the auxiliary gym, which has ample spacing between singers," along with good acoustics.

Meanwhile, Parker's husband works at the middle school, is head lifeguard for Cannon Beach in the summer and volunteers with the Cannon Beach fire department.

Both love the outdoors, and Parker will love it even more as the Gulls get deeper into the cross-country and track seasons.

The view from the new track is "gorgeous," Parker said. "If

you run counter-clockwise around the track, it's the most beautiful curve, and it feels like you're running straight off a cliff towards the ocean. It's a million-dollar view up here."

The rest of her family remains in the Willamette Valley.

"My parents (Scott and Miriam Swanson) bought a small weekly newspaper in Sweet Home," said Parker, explaining the reason for the move from Los Angeles to Oregon. "My dad was a journalism professor, and now runs two weekly newspapers in the Willamette Valley. I grew up in a newspaper office."



Advertising of any kind has been a challenge this past year - When? Where? Even Why?

Working with Heather has really been a pleasure - she has been responsive, thoughtful and very helpful as the Museum has worked to keep our members, community and visitors up to date through our weekly print and digital ad programs. Heather really helped CRMM stay on track in 2020, and is continuing to assist us as we navigate the waters of 2021. *Thanks Heather!*

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