



Request for Qualifications

## **25-acre Riverfront Development Opportunity in St. Helens, Oregon**

<https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/rfps>

<https://youtu.be/C8VkXUMCWP8>

Due date and time: March 25, 2022 by 3 p.m. PST

Responses shall be submitted by mail or hand delivered to:

John Walsh, St. Helens City Administrator  
265 Strand Street  
St. Helens, OR 97051

# Introduction

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The City of St. Helens, Oregon is soliciting a development partner to assist with the transformation of a 25-acre riverfront property adjacent to downtown. The property’s unique waterfront location, mountain views, and proximity to the business district create a rare opportunity to bring vibrant mixed-use development to St. Helens.

St. Helens is a growing community of more than 14,560 people located 30 miles north of Portland along U.S. Highway 30. City leaders and community members have long recognized the former industrial waterfront property as an opportunity to revitalize the community. When the Boise Cascade veneer plant ceased operations in 2009 and the property became available, the City acquired it in order to realize its vision for the waterfront.

Upon acquisition in 2015, the City furthered its public engagement and planning efforts, building community support for the redevelopment to come. The result of the long-range planning efforts and community engagement created a vision for the area to be a mixed-use development that improves public access to the riverfront and honors natural and cultural heritage.

To learn more about the vision for the project, see this video: <https://youtu.be/C8VvXUMCWP8>

## Site Advantages

The St. Helens Riverfront property has a number of site advantages that make this opportunity unique and transformative for the City.

**Waterfront Location & Views.** The property has sweeping views of the Columbia River, Mt. Hood, Mt. St. Helens, and the northern tip of Sauvie Island. It is located adjacent to the nationally registered historic downtown area. The site has nearly 3,000 linear feet of Columbia River frontage.



*View of Mt. St. Helens and Sand Island from the Riverfront property*

**City Commitment to Project Success.** The City has proven its commitment to fulfill the community’s vision by acquiring the property, planning for its reuse, rezoning the property, and acquiring the funding for design and construction of public infrastructure. The City is eager to partner with a developer who can help realize that vision.

**Development Context & Low Cost of Living.** St. Helens offers a small-town lifestyle within a relatively short commute to Portland-area employers and a lower cost of living. As housing in the Portland metro area increase and work-from-home options improve, there has been an influx of new residents seeking the quality of life in St. Helens. The community is making significant investments in its schools, recreation, and public safety facilities (further described on Page 5).

**Riverwalk Project.** The Riverwalk Project will provide public access along the river from the north end of the site at Columbia View Park to the south where it will connect to the bluff trail. There are features along the Riverwalk Project, including a “Rocky Beach” area with access down to the water and a “Recreation Hub” which includes an in-water paddlecraft launch, restrooms, and a cantilevered boardwalk over the Columbia River. Phase I of the Riverwalk Project focuses on the improvements within Columbia View Park at the north end of the site. Phase I is planned for construction bidding Summer 2022.

**RECREATION HUB**  
Looking West



*Riverwalk Phase II Rendering – See plans on the City’s RFP page.*

**Water Access.** St. Helens is a popular destination for boaters visiting from across the region. These visitors will support the future mixed-use development on the Riverfront property and the existing downtown restaurants, retail, and other services. The Riverwalk Project will provide waterfront access to the development.

**Columbia View Park & Tourism.** The site is just south of Columbia View Park, which is the location of many popular annual events, including 13 Nights on the River summer concert series, the Spirit of Halloweentown, the 4th of July fireworks, and the Christmas ships. Columbia View Park is slated for significant improvements with a new amphitheater stage and Phase I of the Riverwalk project, which includes a cantilevered overlook planned for construction bidding Summer 2022.

**COLUMBIA VIEW PARK**  
Looking North



*Riverwalk Phase I Rendering – See plans on the City’s RFP page.*

**Street Extensions & Utilities Design.** The Streets Extensions and Utilities Design is currently at a 90 percent design. Public water, sewer, and storm infrastructure will be extended along a new S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street extension through the site. The Strand Street will also be extended partially down the site, forming a new development block adjacent to the existing downtown. A new bluff trail will be constructed along the west side of the S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street extension, connecting to the Riverwalk Project and Nob Hill Nature Park at the south end of the site. The utility extensions and partial street improvements is planned for construction bidding Summer 2022. The 90



The Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center (OMIC) in Scappoose will offer high tech training and create new jobs. Modeled on an industrial redevelopment project in Sheffield, England, area leaders are spearheading a public-private collaborative research and development outpost for Boeing, Oregon State University, Portland State University, and Oregon Tech. The project will also feature workforce training facilities in OMIC's Training Center, operated by Portland Community College, with the goal of placing graduates into high-wage, high-demand jobs. In addition, Cascade Tissue, Inc. announced a new 600,000 square foot plant in Scappoose that will employ 80 workers. The site will use material from the existing tissue plant in St. Helens.

In 2020, the City completed a parcelization and infrastructure funding plan for a City-owned 204-acre Industrial Business Park. This is the largest remaining parcel of industrial employment lands within St. Helens city limits. Cascade Tissue operates two paper machines employing 100 people on about 30 acres of the property. The City has initiated the design of the public infrastructure which will support industrial redevelopment of the site. The Port of Columbia County is assisting the City in marketing this industrial property to new users.

## Commercial & Institutional Development

On US 30, a new Legacy Health Clinic recently opened its doors in 2020, and a new Grocery Outlet recently received occupancy in 2021. There is also a new commercial subdivision which is in the process of full build out with a drive-through and other commercial uses.

The St. Helens Middle School completed a full rebuild in 2020, and the St. Helens High School is in the process of major re-model, which is being funded with a \$55 million bond. It is expected to be completed in the next four years. The City is also working on design and construction of a new Public Safety Facility to replace the existing St. Helens Police Station.



*St. Helens High School Renovations Rendering (2021)*

## Residential Development

Residential rents grew by nearly 21% between 2016 and 2020 for 2-bedroom apartments. Rents are generally tracking with the Portland market but at a lower value with the average 2-bedroom

rent around \$1,100 for St. Helens and \$1,400 for the Portland MSA<sup>2</sup>. Vacancy rates have also remained lower in St. Helens (4.9%) compared to Portland MSA (6.4%).



*St. Helens Place Apartments (2020)*

The St. Helens Place Apartments, a large development completed in 2020, added 204 luxury rental units to the market. The building is fully leased and asking rents for each dwelling are considerably higher than is usual for St. Helens. Two-bedroom units are listed between \$1,400-\$1,525 which is \$300-\$400 above average for the area. While the property is offering rent concessions (2 weeks free), this is lower than many projects in Portland, indicating a growing interest in St. Helens and a willingness to pay prices akin to those found in Portland.

## Riverfront District

Downtown St. Helens has recently seen several adaptive reuse redevelopment projects, indicating growing interest and investment in the area. The Historic Columbia Theater was fully renovated in 2012, and the Muckle Building was converted into a mixed-use apartment building with a rooftop restaurant and bar in 2016, achieving some of the highest rents in the City.

The area hosts a series of popular events throughout the year, including the annual Spirit of Halloweentown festival that commemorates the 1998 Disney movie filmed in the community. The month-long event attracts thousands of Halloween enthusiasts traveling from around the globe to visit the nostalgic film site. Hotels are booked through September and October because many of these visitors come from out of state for the multi-day events.

With new attractions like the Riverwalk and the City's continued emphasis on tourism, there is high demand for a new hotel in the area. A hotel market analysis would help the City to understand factors that could influence demand on the property and what type of hotel could be most viable in the area.

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<sup>2</sup> Costar



*Annual Halloweentown Celebration on the plaza (2014)*



*Historic Columbia Theater, renovated in 2012*



*The Muckle Building was converted into a mixed-use apartment building with a rooftop bar in 2016.*



*Sand Island Marine Park features campsites and picnic area as a destination for small watercraft.*

## Development Considerations

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### Zoning and Permitted Uses

In 2017, the City changed the zoning and comprehensive plan designations to the **Riverfront District (Mill Sub-District)**. This reflects the long-term expectations for the property's redevelopment as a mixed-use waterfront district. The new zoning allows a flexible mix of uses including a variety of residential, civic, and commercial uses. Limited industrial use is possible as well (e.g., boat building). The ratio of residential to non-residential is not defined in the zoning, allowing for greater market flexibility. The prescriptive height limit is 55 feet, though alternative building heights may be considered through approved variance or Development and Disposition Agreement (DDA). There is a link to the zoning on the last page of this RFQ. Architectural standards that currently apply to the Riverfront District (Plaza Sub-District) will apply to the Mill Sub-District. These are included as a link on the last page of this RFQ.

## Infrastructure Needs

The City will extend the public water mainline, public stormwater systems, and public sanitary sewer onto the site. These plans, currently at 90 percent design, are included as links on the City's RFP page: <https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/rfps>

There are existing stormwater outfalls to Columbia River, and the City will be constructing public stormwater retention areas as part of the utility extension project. There may be opportunities for partnership with the City for private stormwater management on the site. Further exploration and consultation with DEQ will be needed to determine if existing outfalls or if the newly constructed public storm system will have capacity available to support new development.

Partial construction of S. 1st Street and Strand Street improvements will be completed by the City. Complete construction will occur at the time of development to allow flexibility for access locations, frontage improvements, and private lateral connection locations. A diagram which indicates which roadway improvements are included in the City's construction bid is uploaded to the City's RFP page. The City's low-interest loan through the state of Oregon and the City's Urban Renewal Agency will provide funding and construction for the public utility needs on the site. The City anticipates going to bid for utility extensions and partial roadway improvements Summer 2022.

## Brownfield Considerations

The City has taken significant steps to understand and document what contamination exists on the site. A plan to limit the impacts of any environmental issues on the site is in place. To mitigate risks associated with the residual contamination, the City entered a Prospective Purchaser Agreement (PPA) with the State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

A Contaminated Media Management Plan (CMMP) was developed to be a practical "owner's manual" for the City and subsequent developers, and to minimize the burdens associated with the residual contamination on the property during redevelopment.

## Partnership Details

Through this Request for Qualifications, the City is looking for a partner or partners to enter into a master plan process and exclusive negotiating agreement (ENA) that will define the first phase of development. The timeline and deliverables of that ENA will be negotiated upon award of this RFQ.

Upon completion of the deliverables listed in the ENA, the City may enter into a Development and Disposition Agreement (DDA) to implement the first phase of investment as determined in the ENA. Alternatively, the City may consider other mechanisms to advance the site's development.

As part of a DDA and master plan, the City will negotiate the funding of individual components of the site plan with its development partner and outline how the development will meet the public development objectives outlined through the 2016 Waterfront Framework Plan process, shown in **Exhibit 1**.

### Exhibit 1. Public Development Objectives

Core Value*	City “Must-Haves”	City “Preferences”
<b>Public Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compatibility with the Riverwalk Project design which includes an average width of 50’ of public access along the river</li> <li>• Compatibility with mid-block pedestrian crossings outlined in the street extension design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating recreational uses compatible with the Riverwalk Project (i.e., kayak/canoe/bicycle rentals)</li> <li>• Active first floor spaces in strategic locations (i.e., outdoor dining, retail) to activate the Riverwalk Project</li> </ul>
<b>Natural and Cultural Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compatibility with the Riverwalk Project design which includes areas for habitat restoration along the river</li> <li>• Development supports City’s tourism programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited impact of viewsheds</li> <li>• Innovative stormwater facility design</li> <li>• Incorporating interpretive plan into development and programming</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelopment supports existing downtown businesses</li> <li>• Compatibility with the street and utility extension design</li> <li>• Compatibility with the architecture and urban form of the historic downtown</li> <li>• Boutique hotel/restaurant</li> <li>• Mix of residential and commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to perform as a master developer for the entire site</li> <li>• Employment uses that are compatible with residential</li> </ul>

\* From the *St. Helens Waterfront Framework Plan (2016)*

# Submission and Evaluation Process

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Content of the submission should be organized as shown in **Exhibit 2**.

## Exhibit 2. Submittal Requirements and Selection Criteria

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<b>Cover letter</b>	Define lead entity and team members. Highlight key components of the team's vision for the site. Identify and describe the developer, including developer's name, corporation or business name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and the name of the primary project contact.
<b>Preliminary vision for site</b>	<p>Any combination of renderings, images, building massings, site plans, and/or narrative responses can be used to answer the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your vision for the site?</li><li>• Describe your process and approach to developing the site.</li><li>• How is the development a good fit for St. Helens?</li><li>• What do you see as key development challenges?</li><li>• What is your approach to public involvement?</li><li>• What are preliminary ideas for funding and finance?</li><li>• What is your proposed timeline for development?</li></ul>
<b>Experience with public-private partnerships</b>	<p>Describe your team's experience with the successful implementation of projects that involve public-private partnerships, with special attention to the following elements of the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public and adjacent property owner/stakeholder engagement.</li><li>• Refining a development in collaboration with a public entity.</li><li>• Experience with Oregon Bureau of Labor &amp; Industries (BOLI) determinations and willingness to tackle complex financial challenges with creative solutions.</li><li>• Development of a similar scale and complexity.</li><li>• Public benefit received from previous development projects.</li></ul>
<b>Development team experience</b>	<p>Provide evidence of the team's qualifications to implement the proposed development. Provide an organizational chart for your team that identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The individual who would be authorized to negotiate on behalf of the team</li><li>• The individual who would be responsible for coordinating all team activities during due diligence, including site planning activities</li></ul>
<b>References</b>	Contact information for a minimum of three references, preferably from public sector development partners who worked on public-private partnership projects.
<b>Supporting materials</b>	<p>Appendices can include supporting material to supplement responses to the questions above. There are no requirements for contents of appendices and the contents are not scored separately. If included in the appendices, these materials will enhance your team's score on the relevant sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resumes for key personnel</li><li>• Non-binding letters of support from financial partners</li><li>• Example financials from a completed project</li><li>• Images of similar completed projects and testimonials from partners or stakeholders</li></ul>

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Written responses should be succinct. There is no formal page limit, but the City suggests that responses not exceed 20 pages, excluding appendices. Resumes and other marketing materials may be included in an appendix.

RFQ responses will be scored by evaluating the following criteria:

1. A creative and compelling vision for the site that accomplishes public development objectives and aligns with the City's core values and plans.
2. An accurate appraisal of feasibility and response to market conditions.
3. Demonstrated experience and success in previous public-private partnerships.
4. Commitment to flexibility and creative problem solving.
5. Quality representative projects (development process, public benefit received, similar scale/contexts)
6. Qualifications of project team and key project managers.
7. Demonstrated experience engaging with public stakeholders.

## Proposal Instructions

Interested developers must submit 5 hardcopies of the response to the RFQ and an electronic version on a USB flash drive. The City will become owner of all submitted materials and will not pay any costs related to any responses to the RFQ.

### Evaluation Schedule, Process, and Award

**February 18:** Request for Qualifications released.

**February 18 - March 18:** Guided walking tours of the property, as requested.

**March 18:** Deadline for City to issue addenda, if needed.

**March 25:** Responses due at 3 p.m. PST by mail or hand delivery.

**March 25 – April 8:** Review of submittals.

**April 20:** Interviews. Selected developers will be invited to give a presentation on development vision to City Council during a public meeting. This may be in person or on a digital platform.

**May 4:** Selection announced.

### General Provisions and Conditions

The City reserves the right to:

- Modify the timeline and to issue addenda to this document.
- Reject any and all responses.
- Negotiate with more than one redevelopment partner.
- Waive minor irregularities in a response.
- Cancel, revise, or extend this solicitation.

- Request additional information on any response beyond that required by this RFQ.
- Modify the selection process set forth in this RFQ upon written notification to all respondents who have not been rejected at the time of modification.
- Make the final decision on whether to move forward with a development team or not.

## Contact information

Interested parties are welcome to contact the City for a tour or to answer specific questions prior to the deadline for submittal.

John Walsh, City Administrator  
City of St. Helens  
503-366-8211  
[jwalsh@sthelensoregon.gov](mailto:jwalsh@sthelensoregon.gov)

Jennifer Dimsho, Community Development Project Manager  
City of St. Helens  
503-366-8207  
[jdimsho@sthelensoregon.gov](mailto:jdimsho@sthelensoregon.gov)

## Attachment Links

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The following resources are available on the City of St. Helens website for this <https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/rfps>.

- 2021 Survey (OTAK, Inc.)
- Streets & Utilities Design (90 percent) (OTAK, Inc.)
- 2022 Streets & Utilities Construction Bid Package Diagram (OTAK, Inc.)
- Riverwalk Project Design (30 percent) (Mayer/Reed, Inc.)

The **Riverfront District Architectural Guidelines** (2012) which apply to the development of the site are uploaded here:

<https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/planning/page/riverfront-district-architectural-design-guidelines>

The **Riverfront District – Mill-subdistrict zoning** can be found in the St. Helens Municipal Code Title 17:

<https://www.codepublishing.com/OR/StHelens/#!/StHelens17/StHelens1732.html#17.32.173>

The **St. Helens Waterfront Framework Plan** (2016) is uploaded here:

[https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/306/waterfront\\_framework\\_plan\\_adopted\\_with\\_appendicies.pdf](https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/306/waterfront_framework_plan_adopted_with_appendicies.pdf)