



St. Helens Economic Opportunity Analysis

City Council Hearing

April 16, 2025



Why do an EOA?

- Legal requirements (Goal 9: Economy)
- Understand existing conditions and forecast future conditions to inform:
 - ◆ Economic development strategy
 - ◆ Land use policy
 - ◆ Coordination
- Plan for long-term growth
 - ◆ Next 20 years



Image Source: St. Helens Main Street Alliance

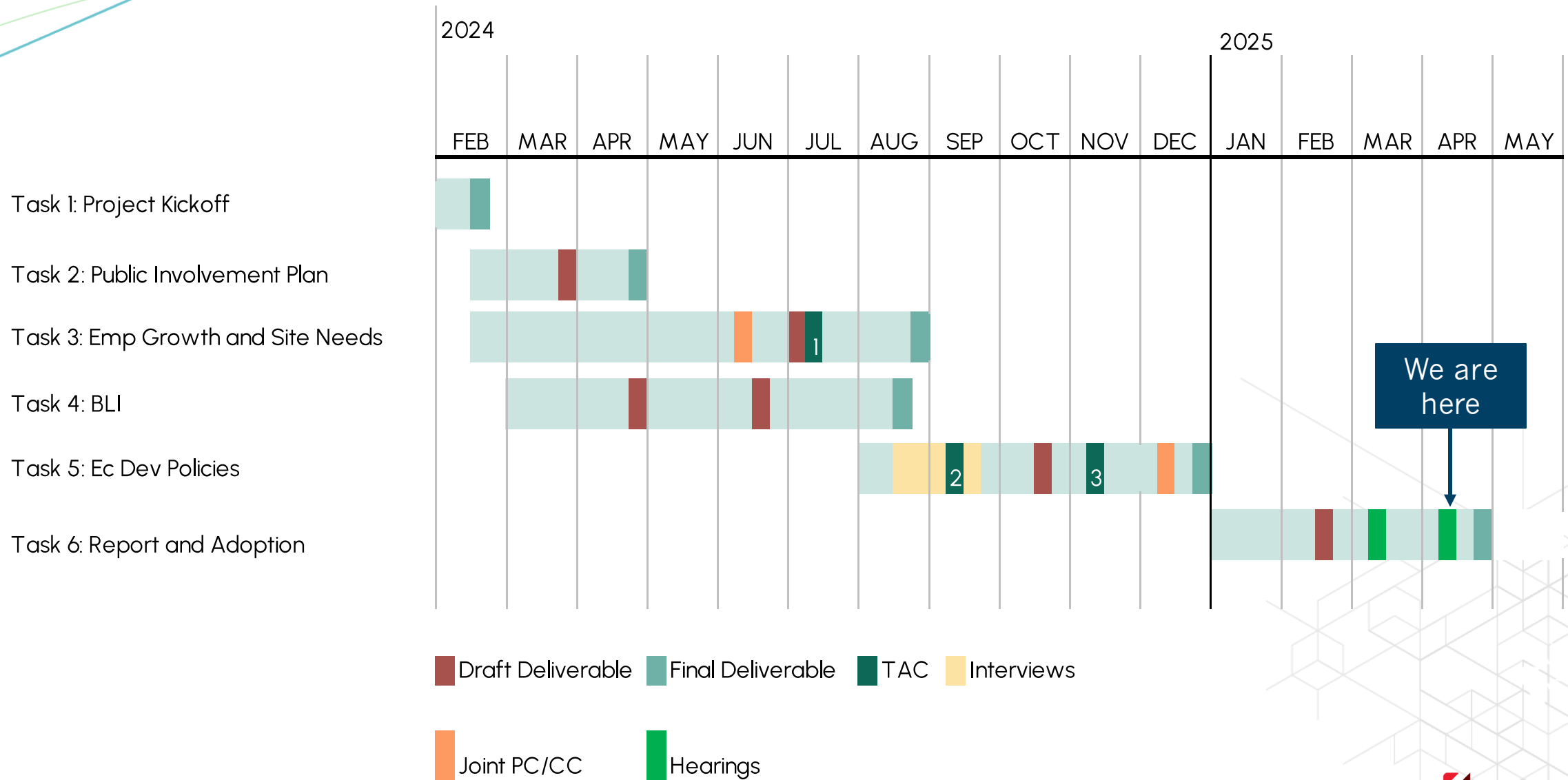
Project Products

- Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA)
 - ◆ Technical document, meant to meet Goal 9 requirements
- Recommendations for Comprehensive Plan policy changes and actions to implement



Image Source: St. Helens Facebook page

Project Schedule



Buildable Lands Inventory

St. Helens Buildable Land Inventory

Comprehensive Plan Designations



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



City Limits



UGB

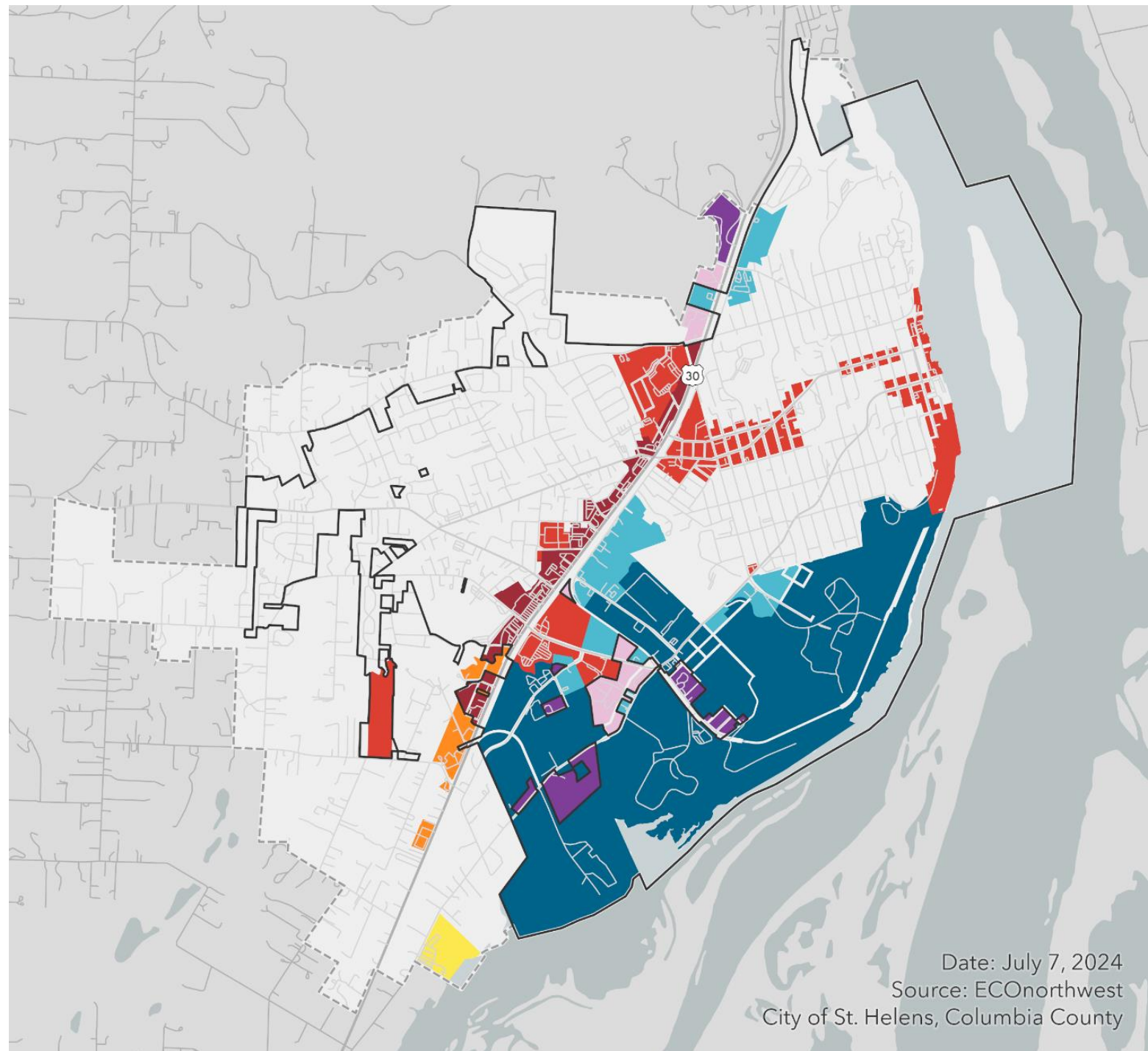
Comprehensive Plan Designations

Incorporated

-  General Commercial (GC)
-  Highway Commercial (HC)
-  Light Industrial (LI)
-  Heavy Industrial (HI)

Unincorporated

-  Unincorporated General Commercial (UGC)
-  Unincorporated Highway Commercial (UHC)
-  Unincorporated Light Industrial (ULI)
-  Unincorporated Heavy Industrial (UHI)



Date: July 7, 2024

Source: ECONorthwest

City of St. Helens, Columbia County

St. Helens Buildable Land Inventory

Constraints



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



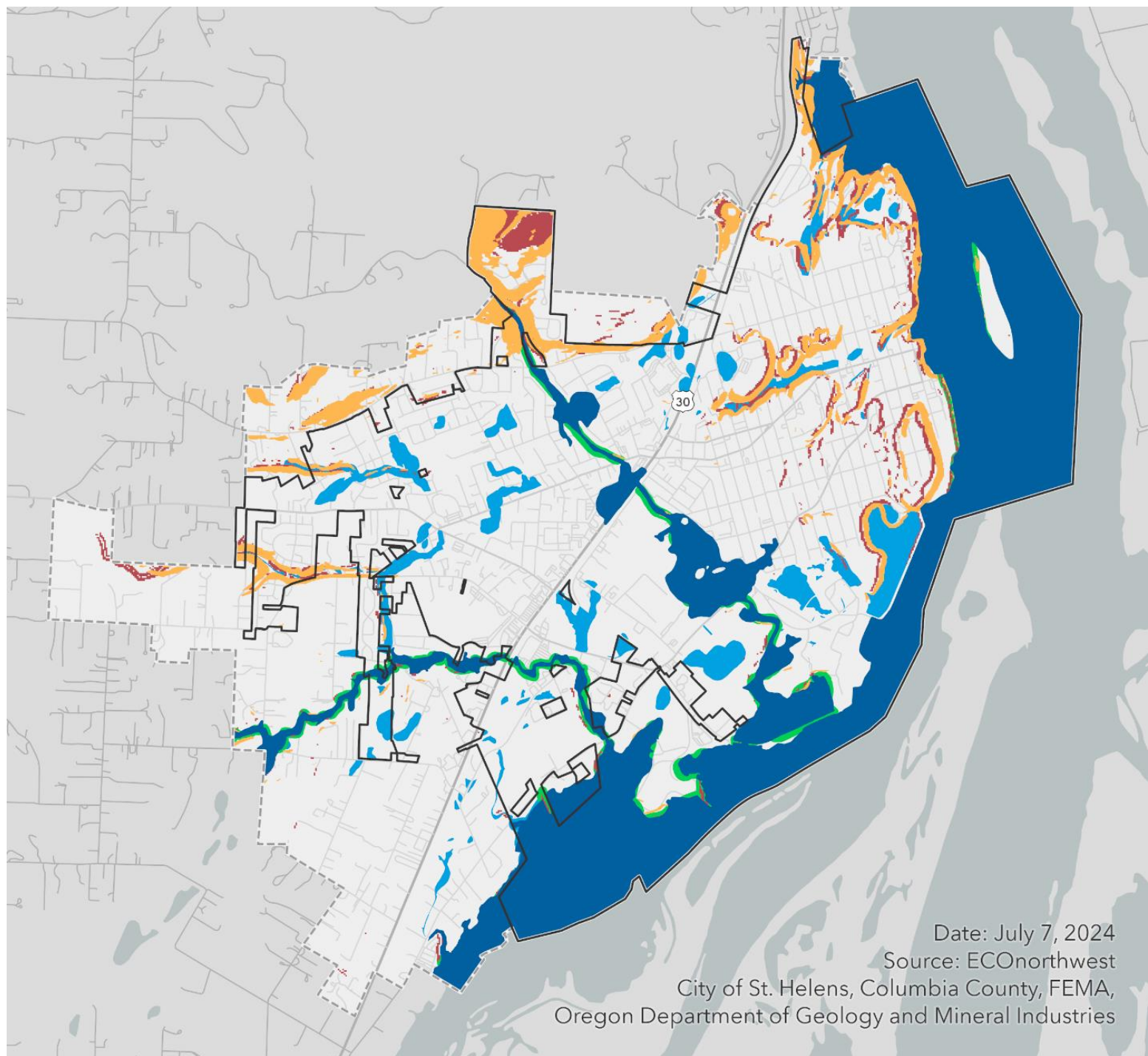
City Limits



UGB

Constraints

- | | |
|--|---|
|  FEMA Regulatory Floodway and 100-Year Floodplains |  Riparian Corridors |
|  Landslide Susceptibility "High" or "Very High" |  Slopes Greater Than 15% |
| |  Wetlands & Protection Zones |



Date: July 7, 2024

Source: ECONorthwest

City of St. Helens, Columbia County, FEMA,
Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries

St. Helens Buildable Land Inventory

Unconstrained Vacant and Partially Vacant* by Comprehensive Plan Designation



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



City Limits



UGB

Comprehensive Plan Designations

Incorporated



General Commercial (GC)



Highway Commercial (HC)



Light Industrial (LI)



Heavy Industrial (HI)

Unincorporated



Unincorporated Highway Commercial (UHC)



Unincorporated Light Industrial (ULI)

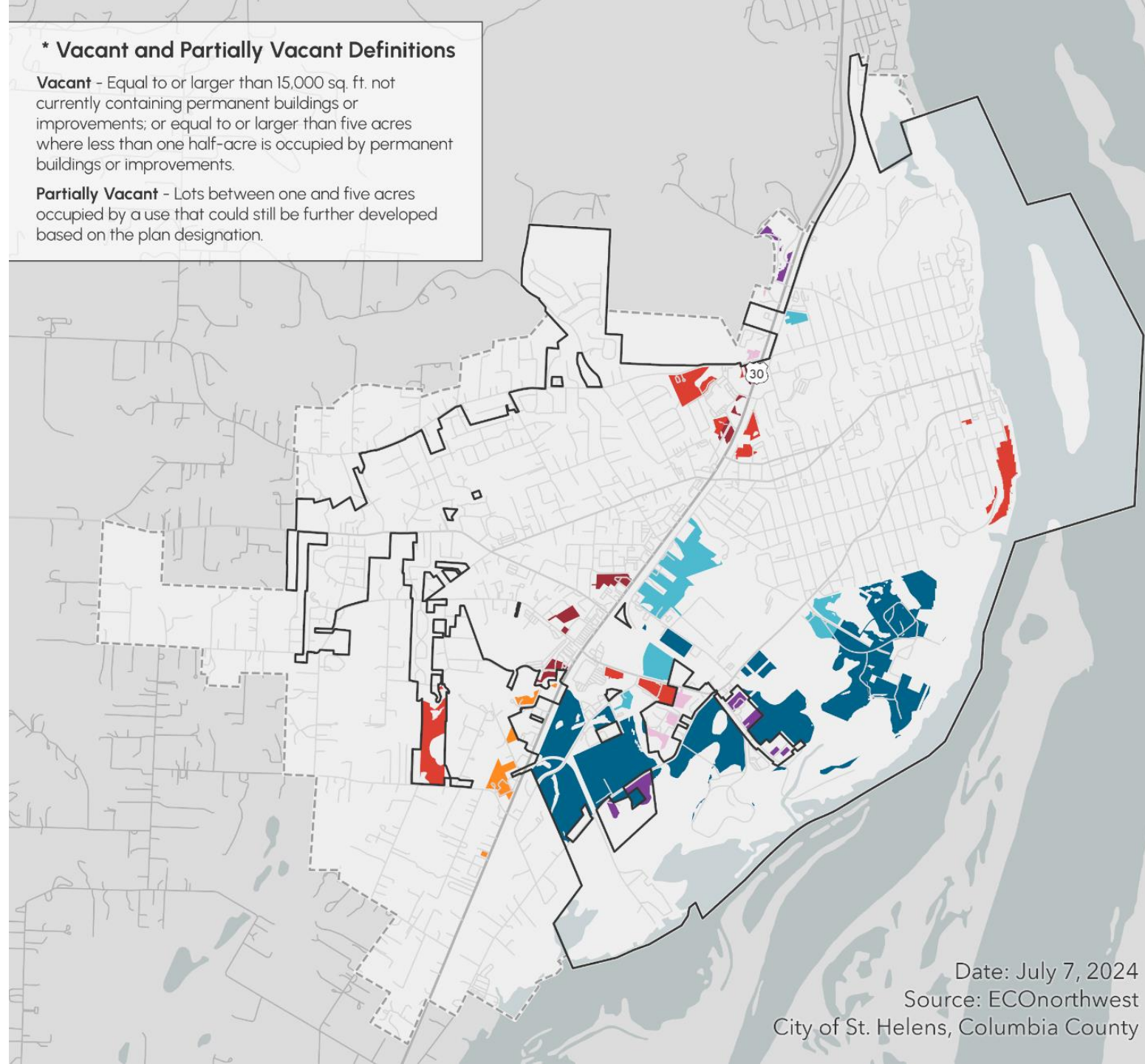


Unincorporated Heavy Industrial (UHI)

* Vacant and Partially Vacant Definitions

Vacant - Equal to or larger than 15,000 sq. ft. not currently containing permanent buildings or improvements; or equal to or larger than five acres where less than one half-acre is occupied by permanent buildings or improvements.

Partially Vacant - Lots between one and five acres occupied by a use that could still be further developed based on the plan designation.



Date: July 7, 2024

Source: ECONorthwest

City of St. Helens, Columbia County

Total Unconstrained Buildable Acres: 302

80% of buildable land is Industrial, mostly in the Heavy Industrial designation

Plan Designation	Total Buildable Acres
Incorporated	280
General Commercial (GC)	42
Highway Commercial (HC)	10
Light Industrial (LI)	46
Heavy Industrial (HI)	181
Unincorporated	22
Unincorporated Highway Commercial (UHC)	6
Unincorporated Light Industrial (ULI)	5
Unincorporated Heavy Industrial (UHI)	11
Total	302

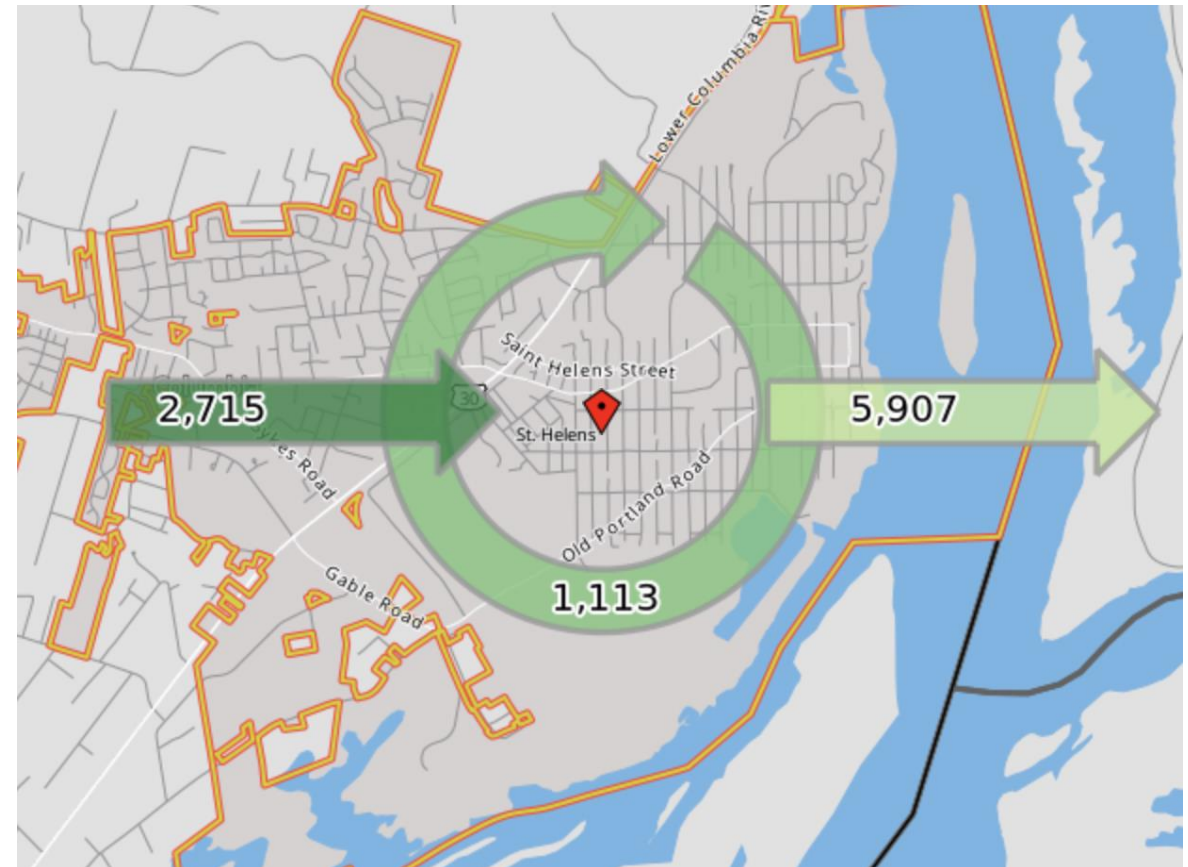
Employment Growth

Considered National and State Economic Trends

- Slowing labor force growth offset by productivity gains
- Increases in automation and AI
- Aging population driving the need for replacement workers
- Remote work trends
- Continued transformation of retail sector
- Rising energy prices and shifting sources

Commuting Patterns

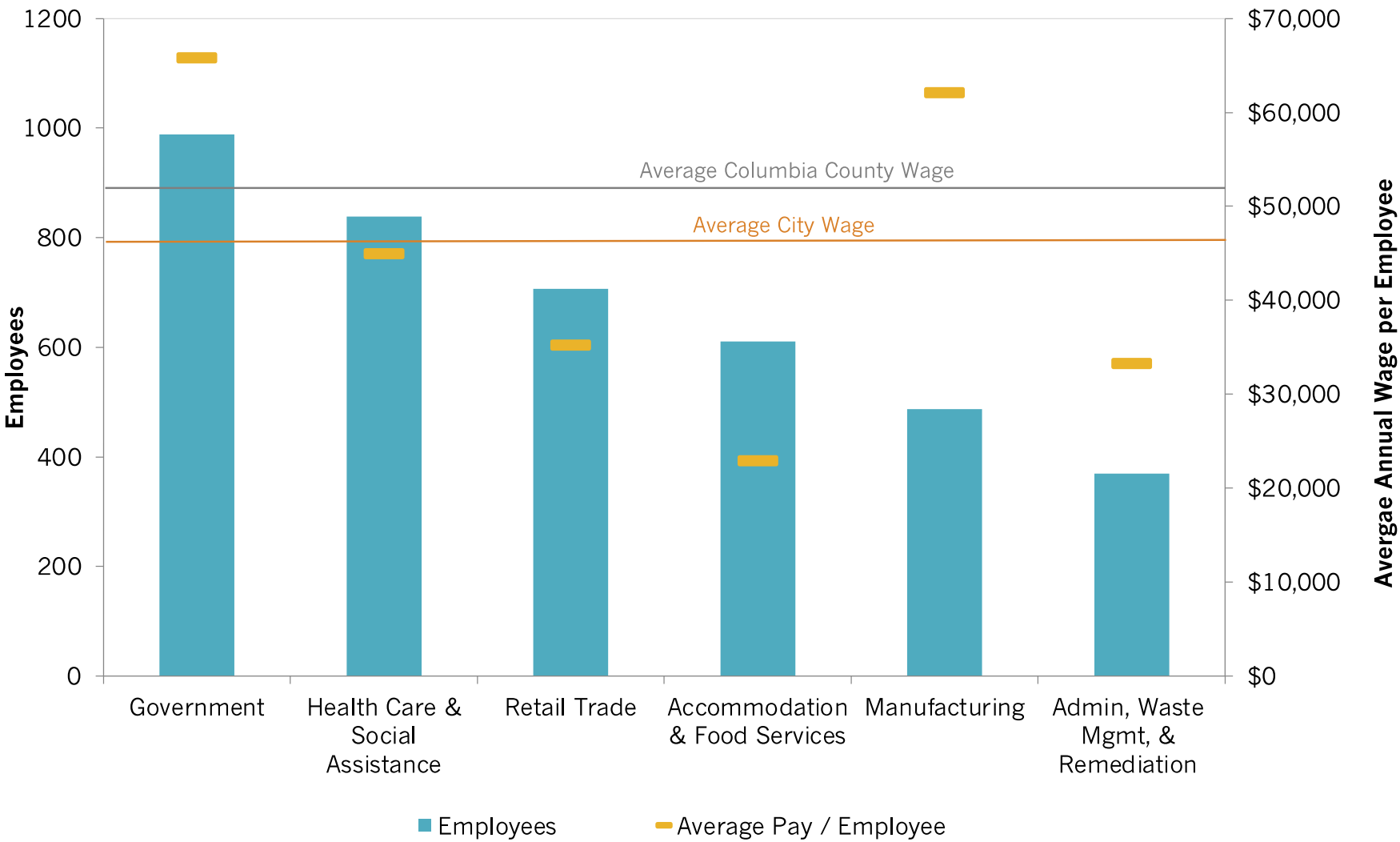
Commuting Flows, St. Helens, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Employment in St. Helens

Covered Employment and Average Pay for Six Largest Sectors, St. Helens UGB, 2022



Average Wage
(2022)

Columbia County:
\$51,135

St. Helens:
\$46,490

Source: Oregon Employment Department,
Quarterly Census of Employment and
Wages, 2022.

Economic Advantages

- Strategic location near Portland region and OMIC
- Transportation infrastructure
 - Highway 30
 - Railroad
 - Deepwater port
- Columbia River access
- Industrial land supply
- Waterfront Redevelopment
- Tourism from Spirit of Halloweentown
- Quality of life

Economic Disadvantages

- Distance from I-5
- Traffic and congestion
- Lack of connection with Highway 30 to other parts of the city
- Power supply issues
- Limited commercial land
- Labor market challenges
- Limited staff capacity

Potential Growth Industries

What industries have the most growth potential in St. Helens?

- Manufacturing*
 - ◆ Paper Manufacturing
 - ◆ Plastics and Rubber Products
 - ◆ Fabricated Metal Products
 - ◆ Food and Beverage
- Trades
- Healthcare like nursing and residential care facilities*
- Retail and services for residents
- Services for visitors, tourism

Estimated Total Employment in St Helens, 2022

Estimated Total Employment by Sector, St. Helens UGB, 2022

Sector	Covered Employment	Estimated Total Employment	Covered % of Total
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting and Mining	25	38	66%
Construction	113	180	63%
Manufacturing	487	536	91%
Wholesale Trade	85	120	71%
Retail Trade	707	1,035	68%
Transportation and Warehousing	80	151	53%
Information	12	29	42%
Finance and Insurance	148	344	43%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	51	471	11%
Prof., Sci., and Tech. Services and Mgmt. of Companies	156	357	44%
Admin. / Support and Waste Mgmt / Remediation Serv.	370	571	65%
Health Care and Social Assistance & Educational Services	839	1,040	81%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	19	85	22%
Accommodation and Food Services	611	682	90%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	179	468	38%
Government	988	1,057	93%
Total	4,870	7,164	68%

St. Helens had an estimated 7,164 total jobs in 2022.

Covered employment accounts for about 68% of total employment in St. Helens.

Source: 2022 covered employment from confidential Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) data provided by the Oregon Employment Department

Employment Forecast, St. Helens UGB, 2025-2045

Employment Base: Estimate 2022 Total

In 2022 there were about 7,164 jobs in St. Helens

Year	Jobs grow at the rate of...		Regional Employment Growth (0.89%)
	City's Historic Employment Growth (2008-22) (0.13%)	Population Growth Forecast for the City (2025-45) (0.47%)	
2025	7,192	7,266	7,356
2045	7,382	7,982	8,777
Change 2025 to 2045			
Employees	190	716	1,421
Percent	3%	10%	19%
Rate (AAGR)	0.13%	0.47%	0.89%

St. Helens is expected to add **1,421 employees** between 2025 and 2045.

Conclusion: St. Helens has sufficient land to meet its 20-year employment growth forecast with a surplus of:

- 214 acres of industrial land
- 4 acres of commercial land

Recommendations:

Update Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies

Implement Actions to Achieve Goals

GOAL A: ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF A HEALTHY, STABLE, AND DIVERSIFIED ECONOMIC BASE FOR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BUSINESSES

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Support the growth, development, and retention of a diverse mix of industries that complement existing strengths and assets in the community, reducing reliance on any single sector.
- ◆ Ensure adequate economic development staffing to implement economic development policy.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ **Hire a community development specialist** to improve coordination with organizations and businesses to make St. Helens a more business-friendly city.
- ◆ **Develop a business growth and attraction strategy** to attract identified target industries and other businesses that St. Helens lacks (such as more healthcare services)

GOAL B: ENSURE THAT ST. HELENS HAS SUFFICIENT LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT A DIVERSE RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Ensure that St. Helens has enough land zoned to provide industrial and commercial opportunities, periodically monitoring land development and updating the land use map
- ◆ Coordinate capital improvement planning with economic development planning to ensure infrastructure availability to employment lands.
- ◆ Partner with providers of infrastructure not provided by the City, such as electricity, natural gas, and high-speed internet, to ensure service is available when needed.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ Continue to work with state partners and electrical companies to **increase access to electrical power to St. Helens** and other communities in the state.
- ◆ Continue to **support regional and local internet feasibility studies** and future implementation of regional high-speed internet.
- 21 ◆ **Conduct a code audit** to ensure that zoning regulations are aligned with the City's goals and policies.

GOAL C: RETAIN AND ATTRACT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THAT DIVERSIFIES ST. HELENS' ECONOMIC BASE, SUPPORTS HIGHER-THAN-COUNTY-AVERAGE-WAGE JOB CREATION AND PROVIDES A BALANCED TAX BASE

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Encourage the redevelopment and repurposing of former industrial sites.
- ◆ Preserve prime industrial land while considering opportunities for rezoning non-prime industrial areas along key commercial corridors.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ **Conduct a market study to identify key opportunities to rezone non-prime heavy or light industrial land to commercial land** to ensure that St. Helens has enough commercial land to support growth.

GOAL D: FOSTER SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Support the retention, growth and expansion of local small businesses.
- ◆ Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in the community.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ **Partner with organizations** like Growing Rural Oregon (GRO) Greater, Main Street Alliance, the South Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, Columbia Economic Team, and the Small Business Development Center to provide resources and support for local entrepreneurs.
- ◆ Work with partners to **support the creation of a business incubator or co-working space** to support start-ups and small businesses.

GOAL E: FOSTER VIBRANT COMMERCIAL ZONES WITH A MIX OF RETAIL AND SERVICE OPTIONS THAT SERVE THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND ENHANCE DESTINATION APPEAL

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Encourage a variety of retail shopping activities to concentrate in core commercial areas to enhance their attractiveness for a broad range of shoppers.
- ◆ Improve connections and encourage development to better connect the Riverfront and Houlton Business Districts.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ **Continue to implement the US 30 and Columbia Boulevard/St. Helens Street Corridor Master Plan and Riverfront Connector Plan** to enhance and better connect the Riverfront and Houlton Business Districts through improved transportation links and wayfinding.

GOAL F: ENHANCE TOURISM AS A KEY ECONOMIC DRIVER

SELECTION OF POLICIES

- ◆ Promote year-round tourism opportunities to extend beyond the popular Halloween season, through partnerships, development of infrastructure, and leveraging assets.
- ◆ Integrate recreational opportunities into the Riverfront District, creating public spaces that promote access to and enjoyment of the Columbia River.

SELECTION OF ACTIONS

- ◆ **Work with tourism consultant to develop a comprehensive tourism strategy** that includes events and attractions for all seasons (beyond Halloweentown) building on St. Helens' unique history, supported by a marketing campaign to promote St. Helens as a year-round destination.
- ◆ **Investigate opportunities to grow sports fishing, kayaking, windsurfing activities, and other water-based activities**, including the development of necessary onshore and in-water amenities.

Thank You!

Any Questions?