



FALL 2016

PORTWORKS

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DESTINATION RIDGEFIELD opportunities and challenges

ilani, the casino under construction at the northern edge of Ridgefield, is expected to draw 4 ½ million people a year. This facility and Ridgefield's many recreational attractions are positioning the area as a visitor destination location.

Ridgefield's day as a destination location is upon us. The community enjoys a picturesque waterfront that beckons boaters, kayakers, bikers, walkers and fishing enthusiasts; a national wildlife refuge that draws over 100,000 visitors and birdwatchers annually, swaths of pastureland appealing to those in the equestrian pursuits, a links-style golf course, an active amphitheater with a regional draw, a vibrant events center and fairgrounds complex, a walkable downtown and a bevy of local wineries. And to top off the long list of destination amenities, a large-scale casino is on the horizon.

This all adds up to Ridgefield ripening as a destination location. If being a destination is part of Ridgefield's destiny, can area businesses benefit from an increasing number of visitors? And, if something's holding that potential back, what is it?

To find out, the port spoke with representatives from some of these recreational facilities to gain insight on Ridgefield's destination opportunities and challenges.



ILANI

Kara Fox-Larose is president and general manager of ilani. The casino, developed by Salishan-Mohegan LLC in collaboration with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, is currently under construction in Ridgefield, just west of I-5 at the La Center exit. Fox-Larose has worked

with the Mohegan Tribe for 21 years in the eastern United States; she moved here for this project, which is expected to open spring 2017.

Fox-Larose anticipates the casino will see 4 ½ million visits per year, with a market population as far away as 60 to 90 miles. There is little doubt ilani will have a significant effect on Ridgefield business; Fox-Larose is optimistic it can be positive.

"While we will be a destination location, we see ourselves as another option in the region. We plan to coordinate and strategize with the business community to leverage what the region has to offer. We don't see ourselves as standalone."

DESTINATION RIDGEFIELD, PAGE 2

PORT EARNS \$50K GRANT FOR DARK FIBER FEASIBILITY STUDY

As reported earlier, the Port of Ridgefield is aiming to bring available data speeds in the area to a level on par with that of the Portland-Metro area by constructing a dark fiber network within the Discovery Corridor.

The port's interest in this infrastructure development took a step forward recently with a \$50,000 grant award from the State of Washington's Community Economic Revitalization Board. CERB provides funding to local governments and federally-recognized tribes for public infrastructure which supports private business growth and expansion.

At a CERB board meeting on September 15, members voted unanimously to award the \$50,000 grant – the highest available award amount for a planning grant - directly following the port's presentation.

The port's request was for funds to complete a feasibility study and formal needs analysis for constructing a fiber optic broadband "loop" around the Ridgefield Port District, also known as the Discovery Corridor. The port will not provide



"Connectivity is mission critical to our area for growing business, competing globally, and providing our citizens with access to a world-class education and other services."

Nelson Holmberg
Vice President, Innovation

services, but will simply provide the fiber network for private carriers that wish to lease broadband capacity from the port.

Nelson Holmberg, vice president, innovation for the Port of Ridgefield, who with port CEO Brent Grening presented at the CERB meeting, said a feasibility study would determine construction costs and aid in determining a cost/benefit analysis for the infrastructure development and project revenue generation capacity.

In the face of the onrushing innovation economy, port representatives see dark fiber optics installation in North Clark County as key to the organization's efforts to best serve the community, and Holmberg was pleased the CERB board understood its importance.

"Connectivity is mission critical to our area for growing business, competing globally, and providing our citizens with access to a world-class education and other services."

For more information about the port's fiber project, including the forum, visit portridgefield.org.



CHARTING OUR COURSE

Clean environment, healthy economy

BY BRUCE WISEMAN, PORT COMMISSIONER

It shouldn't be a surprise to any of us who live in and appreciate Ridgefield that our town and surrounding area is appealing to visitors. The wildlife refuge, Lake River, kayaking, boating and fishing, incredible natural beauty – what's not to like?

Unlike many communities that trade on their built environment, Ridgefield has a natural side. We didn't create it, but we can preserve, protect and enjoy our natural environment.

As the Portland-Metro area grows, Ridgefield has been discovered. More visitors will come. The law of numbers dictates that more urban dwellers means more people looking for recreational outlets. Ridgefield's close proximity makes it an ideal place to experience nature as an escape from the hubbub for an afternoon.

The good news about these visitors – or tourists if you want to call them that – is that generally speaking, people who come here to enjoy nature also understand the need to be caretakers of it. These visitors are less-likely than some to leave trash in their wake or be careless with the beauty of this place.

These environmental tourists also bring money to our community and support local business. This cycle of inter-dependence bodes well for Ridgefield. By taking care of our environment, we've created a quality place to live and visit. With the money that comes from visitors seeking to enjoy the nature we protect, our economy is made healthier, helping those who choose to live here and do business here.

Thus by maintaining a healthy environment Ridgefield will sustain a healthy economy. I'd say that as a community, we should be proud we did it right.

DESTINATION RIDGEFIELD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Expecting to rely on the region for most of the casino's products and services, Fox-Larose sees opportunity for those businesses willing to reach out to ilani.

"In other communities in which I've worked, I've seen a lot of businesses grow with us."

"In other communities in which I've worked, I've seen a lot of businesses grow with us."

Kara Fox-Larose
President & General Manager, ilani

The casino is looking for quality partners, she said, and local businesses would benefit by exploring options to work with the casino and participating in its request for proposals process. She cited Ridgefield's Corwin Beverage as example.

"They are our first vendor partner; we just had our first job fair with them. We appreciate Corwin's service-oriented approach and quality products."

ilani plans to build a 300-500 room hotel in its second phase of construction, although Fox-Larose said she can't guess at how many casino visitors will overnight there. Much of its use will likely come from a conference center with capacity for 1,000 – planned for opening just six months after the casino throws its doors open. She expects area lodging venues will benefit, even after ilani opens its own hotel.

"Our other casino hotels run at 97% occupancy. We've seen other hotels spring up around our casinos, and they are successful, too."

CLARK COUNTY EVENT CENTER AT THE FAIRGROUNDS

Matt Bell-Ferris is marketing director for the county-owned Clark County Event Center at the Fairgrounds. He's been in the business for many years, working at a variety of venues around the country.

He said approximately one million people per year attend events and activities at the facility - 250,000 through the course of the 10-day Clark County Fair.

"Our fair is considered the largest family event in the

"In my humble but experienced opinion, if there were 500 hotel rooms within walking distance of the event center, we would be a different facility."

Matt Bell-Ferris
Marketing Director, Clark County Event Center

Portland-Metro area," Bell-Ferris said.

He believes, however, that only a small percentage

of event-center goes to the fair, trade shows and many other types of events held here are people from outside the metro-area, reducing the potential for overnight stay requirements. Larger shows, though, such as the Washington State Horse Expo draw people from further afield; last year the event drew 7,500 people from Oregon and Washington over a three-day period. Bell-Ferris thinks an improvement in the hospitality infrastructure could increase the numbers of people who stay the night and would spend more time in the Ridgefield area.

"I think the event center is underutilized due to lack of nearby hotel rooms, few restaurants and limited transportation facilities between local hotels and the center." He noted that event planners interested in the facilities back away when they learn those amenities aren't available.

"In my humble but experienced opinion, if there were 500 hotel rooms within walking distance of the event center, we would be a different facility."

But Bell-Ferris doesn't believe people are drawn to Ridgefield for other activities, and then decide to go to one of the facility's events.

"Our tag line is 'Your event destination,' so I don't see it working the other way around."

And Bell-Ferris' two-bits on the new casino? "I think it will redefine what Clark County business looks like."



BICYCLING

Dave Ripp is executive director of the Port of Camas-Washougal, and some might call him an extreme sports enthusiast – he competes in triathlons and bicycle events, sometimes logging up to 200 miles per week on his bike for training purposes. Ripp rides in Ridgefield occasionally when he's looking for something

"I think more people would ride there and spend more time in downtown Ridgefield if there was more to do when they got there... Cyclists will incorporate a destination location into their ride."

Dave Ripp
Executive Director, Port of Camas-Washougal

a little different, even though there aren't a lot of built-out bike lanes.

"I like riding in Ridgefield because the roads aren't super-busy, and there are lots of 'rollers,'" – that's cyclist lingo for rolling hills.

Ripp thinks Ridgefield has the potential to be a destination bicycling spot with a few additions.

"I think more people would ride there and spend more time in downtown Ridgefield if there was more to do when they got there; a hip and cool coffee shop or brew pub. Cyclists will incorporate a destination location into their ride."

Those additions could mean a great deal to Ridgefield. Cycling is big business in Washington State, accounting for the third highest expenditure for recreational activities,

logging \$3.1 billion for the state economy, according to a 2015 study titled Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State. The study refers to bicyclists as "wallets on wheels," – they spend money in the areas in which they ride.

In an earlier Travel Oregon study, it was noted that 83% of cyclists also hike, and 58% also visit at least one microbrewery.

RIDGEFIELD MAIN STREET & KOI POND CELLARS

Frank Shuman is president of the Ridgefield Main Street program. He said he knows when the port is built-out on its waterfront property it will bring more people to the downtown area.

But he believes downtown Ridgefield has the potential to be a destination attraction now with the addition of several amenities, including a new library, of which fundraising efforts are in the works.

"People will come downtown to go to a new library. We also need another winery and a taproom or brewery downtown, and more – and a greater variety – of restaurants. A critical mass of restaurants draws diners to an area."

Shuman also believes Overlook Park is a huge draw, and that expanding the facilities for more usable space

"Drinking and driving is not okay. Even if people hire a limo to take them around, they still have to drive home. We could put winery tour packages together because we have a critical mass of wineries – but not without a hotel."

Michelle Parker
Co-Owner, Koi Pond Cellars

would be helpful. And, mirroring the refrain of others, lodging is another hot button of Shuman's.

"A hotel would be an important asset."

Michelle Parker is co-owner of downtown's Koi Pond Cellars with her husband, Wes. She agrees with Shuman on the need for a downtown hotel, especially for wine tours to the many Ridgefield wineries.

"Drinking and driving is not okay. Even if people hire a limo to take them around, they still have to drive home. We could put winery tour packages together because we have a critical mass of wineries – but not without a hotel."

Parker does think that while the downtown area is improving, it could use a little more sprucing up.

"We need a little more curb appeal downtown. It's getting better, but the side streets need a little love, too," she said.

On an optimistic note Parker believes the "bones" of the place make for a great wine-tasting destination.

"Downtown Ridgefield is quaint, the soil is fertile, and there's a lot of open land for grape-growing."

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"Downtown Ridgefield is quaint, the soil is fertile, and there's a lot of open land for grape-growing."



TRI-MOUNTAIN GOLF

Clark County owns Tri-Mountain Golf Course, an 18-hole, links-style course a mile or so northeast of the Ridgefield junction. Robert (Bob) Stevens is director of general services for Clark County; Tri-Mountain is under his purview. The county contracts with golf management firm Billy Casper Golf to run the course, with Ridgefield resident Mike Bender at the helm as PGA general manager and head golf professional.

Although winter weather conditions cause the greatest variation in annual course play, last year 41,000 rounds were played at Tri-Mountain. With the exception of tournaments that each draw 5,000 to 6,000 players annually from all over, Bender said the largest demographic of course users are within north Clark County. But he thinks there's an opportunity to expand play to more out-of-area visitors with the right additions, especially lodging.

"I believe people would stay in Ridgefield if they could."

Mike Bender
PGA General Manager, Head Golf Professional
Tri-Mountain Golf

"For Ridgefield to become a destination location it needs hotels. People come to visit and there's no place to stay within Ridgefield. A hotel near here would benefit the course – people who come to tournaments or come here on business and want to play the course stay in Vancouver."

Bender noted that Dollar Store, Corwin Beverages, and other large Ridgefield-based businesses hold meetings in the area, and that attendees would prefer to stay in a hotel near a golf course so they can play in their off-time.

"I believe people would stay in Ridgefield if they could." Stevens and Bender both think Ridgefield could use more specialty shopping and dining options, too.

"People in this area are looking for more and different restaurants offering greater variety," Bender said.

Stevens believes that when the casino opens, Tri-Mountain's out-of-area course players may stay at its hotel. And if ilani builds its own golf course, he believes the casino and its course will help – not hurt – Tri -Mountain.

"Ridgefield will become a destination by default; it's up to people here to capitalize on it."

Robert (Bob) Stevens
Director of General Services, Clark County

"After the casino is built," Stevens said, "I can see people spending a week here – going to the fair, concerts at the amphitheater, golfing, visiting the wildlife refuge, kayaking, walking the trails – there's lots to do here. Ridgefield will become a destination by default; it's up to people here to capitalize on it."

FUN FACTS

Annual visits to Ridgefield by-the-numbers

ilani Casino (est.)
4,500,000

National Wildlife Refuge
110,000

Clark County Birdfest Attendees
4,000

Sunlight Supply Amphitheater
120,000
(30% possible overnighters)

Clark County Event Center at the Fairgrounds
1,000,000

Tri-Mountain Golf Rounds
38,000-42,000

Vessel Launches Non-motorized & motorized
12,000

7 DAYS IN RIDGEFIELD



BIZBrief

WDFW BUILDING PROGRESSES

The Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife is one step closer to calling Ridgefield home with the Port of Ridgefield's construction bid award for WDFW's new building at S. 11th Street. The award was made during a special meeting of the port commission on September 22; work commenced on October 3, although grading work had been done by the port previously.

The project was awarded to 2KG Contractors, Inc. of Portland with a winning (lowest) bid of \$5,705,092. 2KG will execute work consisting of the construction of an approximately 31,400 square foot tilt-up concrete office and warehouse building and an 8,000 square feet detached storage area for WDFW on the port-owned site. Building completion is anticipated to be next June. WDFW will employ over 100 employees at this regional headquarters location.

PORT HOLDS ANNUAL PLANNING SESSION

Port commissioners, staff and consultants met on August 31 for APEX, the port's annual planning meeting. At this public meeting, held in the conference room of Mackenzie's Vancouver office, participants received a thorough financial overview of the port's capital capacity and planning strategy for the next six years presented by port financial consultant Paul Lewis.

Other areas of focus at the all-day session were the port's investment goals and current and future lines of business as the port shifts from being an environmental clean-up port to today's community port.

"As a community port we facilitate locally-directed investment in things that need doing – things like the rail overpass, WDFW office building and a fiber optic network," said port CEO Brent Grening.

Port of Ridgefield emphasis is also on participating in the new "knowledge" economy, in which product output is in intangibles, not industrial products of the past. The port's proposed dark fiber development is a major plank in its knowledge economy platform.

At the session, port commissioners each led discussion of a specific interest area; topics included what it means to be a 21st-century port, the port's role in job growth and education, and the value of port partnerships to the Ridgefield community.



ON THE LEVEL

Residents, visitors, business make Discovery Corridor a 'true Destination'

BY BRENT GRENING, CEO

The Discovery Corridor was the big topic at a recent Fairgrounds Neighborhood Association meeting. An impressive number of citizens, elected representatives, candidates and agency folk gathered to meet, listen and get the latest on what's happening in the corridor.

We all have a stake in what happens along the nine-mile stretch of I-5 extending south from the Lewis River to Salmon Creek – Aka, "The Discovery Corridor." This is especially true for people who live and own property near I-5.

In this issue we've highlighted local entertainment and recreation offerings. We make the case that our area is a popular destination for visitors. Yet our area is also a popular destination for people looking for homes, great schools, and livable communities. With more people come business and employment opportunities, making the area a destination for growing companies as well.

Where's it all headed? Salmon Creek has become a center of health care. Education & research is growing throughout the Discovery Corridor. Think WSU, Clark College, I-Tech Prep – not to mention a growing K-12 system. Back to entertainment and recreation: Our towns, the ilani Casino, fairgrounds, amphitheater, golf course, wildlands, rivers, restaurants, pubs, wineries – the list goes on – are all working together to create a place where people want to live, work, hang-out and play. A true Destination.

All the pieces work together. All are dependent on each other. So kudos to the Fairgrounds Neighborhood Association and Bridget Schwarz for calling the meeting. Because, the most important thing we can do for the land and people in the corridor, is to have people know each other.



NEW LIFE FOR OLD BUILDING: NOW SERVES REGION'S AND RIDGEFIELD'S BROADBAND NEEDS

Why, exactly, is an old building in downtown Portland so important to Ridgefield? Brent Grening, Port of Ridgefield CEO and Nelson Holmberg, vice president, innovation, learned why at a recent trip to downtown Portland with Joe Poire, CEO for the Port of Whitman County.

With its tall and stately façade, the Pittock Block building, constructed in 1913, looks like one of many multi-storied office buildings of its era. The structure, which encompasses an entire city block in downtown Portland, was built on the site of the home of Henry Pittock, who at the time was the publisher of the Oregonian newspaper. Pittock vacated and sold the site in preparation for his move to the Pittock Mansion in Portland's West Hills.

History

The Pittock Block was originally constructed for the purpose of housing the Northwestern Electric Company, which generated electricity via steam-powered equipment in the building's basement. The excess steam was funneled out through an elaborate system of underground ducts to provide heat to the downtown area. Offices and storefronts graced much of the rest of the building, but the Pittock Block's originally-intended purpose was to generate downtown Portland's electricity and heating needs via a sophisticated infrastructure for its day.

Current

Today, in a quirk of historic fate, behind the walls of this substantial building is the foundation for the region's modern-day data communications system - a vital link to bringing Portland to Ridgefield – and giving Ridgefield access to the world. Those former steam ducts now serve as pathways for miles and miles of fiber and other data delivery cable beneath Portland's streets.

Home to the Pittock Internet Exchange, the Pittock

Block is a hub of global interconnectivity. Located just across the street from the terminus of the main data cable that runs between Tokyo, Japan and Portland across the Pacific Ocean, the PIE provides the space and facilities for companies who digitally connect to the rest of the world.

Over 100 years ago the Pittock Building in Portland served the downtown's heating and electricity needs. Today it serves as the region's global communications hub. The Port of Ridgefield seeks a connection to the facility for its dark fiber development project that will enhance internet and data speeds for the Ridgefield area.

The trio embarked on the outing to explore building a connection between North County and the PIE. If this proves possible, the port will have two construction projects – one for the 42-mile fiber loop to serve the Ridgefield and the Discovery Corridor, and another to connect into downtown Portland.

"The Pittock Internet Exchange is essentially a 'meet-up' place for all broadband carriers; they all need to locate their equipment in this building to access the region's data infrastructure," Poire said. "This connection will give Ridgefield a data highway to and from this meet-up facility, allowing internet providers access to the Ridgefield community."

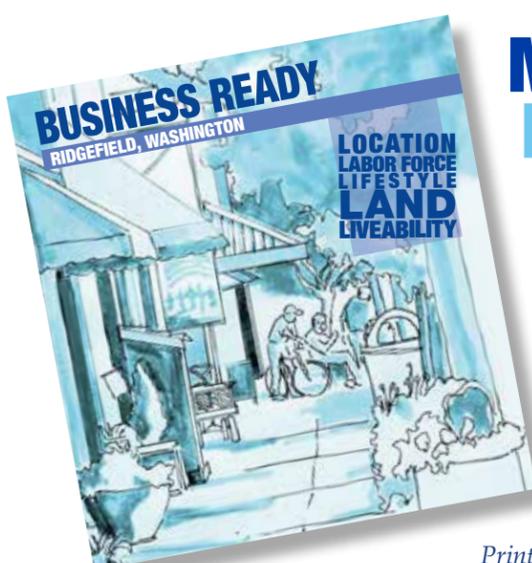
Bandwidth Expansion

One important aspect of Port of Ridgefield's desire to connect to this facility is that it will allow expansion of bandwidth between WSU Vancouver and WSU's Pullman campus – essential to the university's online educational capacity and research data delivery ability.

Holmberg indicated the benefit of this direct access from the port's fiber backbone to the Pittock Block is significant.

"We will see increased efficiencies and reduced costs while providing a continuous business opportunity for industry currently in Ridgefield, and those businesses that will come to the area in the future."

For more information about the port's dark fiber development project, visit portridgefield.org.



MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR RIDGEFIELD

A months-long collaborative project between the City and Port of Ridgefield concluded recently, providing the two entities with a new tool in their collective economic development tool belts to use in attracting job-producing businesses to the Discovery Corridor.

A "Business Ready" marketing folder that outlines the many benefits of doing business in Ridgefield also features a pocket containing specific development and business-relevant information about each of the city's three subareas: The Junction, 45th & Pioneer Crossing, and the Downtown-Waterfront area.

Printed copies are available at the Port of Ridgefield offices as well as Ridgefield City Hall.