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## St. Helens Asset-Based Community Development

Portland State University. Center for Public Interest Design

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# **St. Helens Asset-Based Community Development**

**The Center for Public Interest Design**

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## Center for Public Interest Design

The Center for Public Interest Design (CPID) is a research [+action] center at Portland State University (PSU) that aims to investigate, promote, and engage in inclusive design practices that address the growing needs of underserved communities worldwide. Through research and design, fieldwork, and public outreach, we promote a mode of practice that is socially conscious, environmentally sustainable, and economically accessible to all.

## Letter from the Director

It's a pleasure for the team at the Center for Public Interest Design (CPID) to make a contribution in support of this unique and much needed housing opportunity in our region. Though one cannot predict the future, asset-based community development (ABCD) studies, like the one we undertook here for Community Development Partners (CDP), help to lay an important foundation of relationship and connection with the community that will host the new housing project residents. In doing so they help improve immeasurably, not only the new residents' chance for a productive and happy life, but also the opportunity to become a vital part of the community they will join. In creating this report we have come to know many of the residents of St. Helens, all of whom have been extremely generous with their time and deep knowledge of their town and region. Asset-based studies like this take time, both for our staff, but most importantly, the people of St. Helens. Without their knowledge and experience of the place these studies would have no value. This report is as much a tribute to their contributions as to our own efforts.

At the CPID, we strive to be good citizens, working to address social justice issues with sustainability and design. The work and methodologies of this report build upon several decades of progressive practice and research in public interest design, always in the service of underserved communities. Though the methodologies of our studies have evolved over the decades, the focus on fostering collaboration among community members and building on the assets, skills, and deep local knowledge of each host community to achieve a more sustainable and equitable way of life for all, has not. ABCD accounts for the contribution of client communities and the unique social, political, and economic conditions of each place, while making the best use of our planet's limited resources. It's also dependent on the commitment, and deep collaboration between project partners, to make the current conditions that make this change possible. If this study makes anything evident, it is that CDP, engAGE NW, Northwest Oregon Housing Authority (NOHA), and CPID are all building this future housing community along with the efforts, knowledge, and assets of the St Helens community. In a time in which we urgently need communities like these so that we can begin to address the deep housing and wealth inequities of our state and country, our communities need to be made partners if these efforts are to succeed. The generosity and deep commitment of the St. Helens community that has been made evident throughout our study makes us hopeful that this project, and most importantly its residents, have a bright future.

**Sergio A. Palleroni**  
Director, Center for Public Interest Design  
Professor, School of Architecture  
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# Asset-Based Community Development

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a new model of development that challenges the top-down approach of the old needs-based development, where outside organizations step in on 'behalf' of the community (Boyd et al. 2008). The ABCD approach offers a sustainable model of development, one that prioritizes a grassroots, bottom-up approach to transformative change and community empowerment.

The traditional, needs-based model of community development, specifically in the context of affordable housing, has perpetuated a narrative of "criminality" that is problematic in identity-making for individuals who rely on the affordable housing system (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996). Not only does this model present a problematic view of affordable housing and its residents, it further disenfranchises those who already live on the fringes of society. The needs-based development model relies on outsiders to come in and solve these issues, creating a client-neighborhood where "lower-income neighborhoods are now environments of service where behaviors are affected because residents come to believe that their well-being depends upon being a client" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1996, 23). Essentially residents are forced into operating under this client-type relationship, rather than being empowered to create a collective identity and work together.

ABCD is, by contrast, a capacity-focused model that seeks to create a more equitable society for each individual through the "development of policies and activities based on capacities, skills and assets, of lower income people and their neighborhoods" (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996, 25). The ABCD approach seeks to identify the already-existing skills, services, and assets that exist at the local level and mobilize them to better serve the community as a whole. This involves taking inventory and physically mapping out these assets and opportunities, interviewing key stakeholders to identify individuals and organizations that are already doing the work to serve and mobilize the community. Not only does this model stimulate the local economy, it also empowers marginalized community members because it transforms the 'client/recipient into a 'contributor' (ibid). ABCD emphasizes relationship-building, which is the key to increasing social capital within the community and generating linkages between the micro and the macro (ABCD Toolkit).



# Executive Summary

A development of Community Development Partners (CDP) and the Northwest Housing Authority (NOHA), the St. Helens affordable housing project will address the community's need for high-quality affordable housing, while promoting an intergenerational and intercultural community. In partnership with engAGE NW, a leading organization in intergenerational housing programming, the project also aspires to support the larger needs of the community as a whole by providing a hub for all residents of St. Helens to come together. In addition, the importance of nature and the larger theme of ecology and connection to the natural environment, acted as a framework to guide the research, design, and development process. This project also seeks to address the acknowledgement to this connection with the natural context and of the Indigenous history of the land it sits on.

As an initiative of the Center for Public Interest Design (CPID), this report aims to support and inform the development of this intergenerational, affordable-housing community. The role of the CPID is to identify community assets using the ABCD model, conduct community outreach and engagement, and provide design and programming recommendations based on the outreach process. The desired outcome of this work is to encourage a more robust community-building strategy and provide a more sustainable, community-oriented approach to design and programming, while leveraging the already existing infrastructure and assets in the St. Helens community, and creating an age-

friendly community, following in line with the global Age-Friendly Communities movement.

## The Process

Employing the ABCD approach to community development, the CPID was able to identify various organizations, amenities, and service-providers in the context of food, mental health and health services, education and arts, recreation, and environment and equity. Once these assets were identified, they were then mapped in relation to the housing site, in terms of transportation accessibility. Alternative transportation accessibility to assets, such as walking, biking, and public transit routes, were also taken into consideration. Organizations were then contacted by the CPID for further information, with the intention to understand available services and amenities, and to identify potential collaboration opportunities to bring them on-site to directly serve future residents.

## Key Findings

Throughout the research and engagement process, the overarching themes of community-building and accessibility rose to the forefront. The availability of two community centers onsite for use by the residents and the wider St. Helens community will be an important feature to allow outside community assets to operate programming onsite. The larger community need for multi-purpose spaces, community kitchens, and ADA accessible meeting spaces has the potential to make

the St. Helens affordable housing complex an asset for the entire St. Helens community. Emphasis on a multi-use or flexible space in the community center rang true throughout the engagement process, it will allow for maximum use of the space, and for more diverse community organizations and partners to be successful in bringing their programming on-site. The incorporation of a teaching kitchen and arts room in the senior building will allow for robust programming and integration of all ages in a single space.

In addition to thoughtfully planned community centers, the CPID identified program opportunities throughout the site, where residents can come together and make the site their own. These opportunities include community gardens, walking paths along the adjacent wetlands, community art projects involving the parking lot, and other art and recreation projects and activities. The ultimate goal of creating a successful, intergenerational community, where residents of all ages and backgrounds can come together and develop a sense of place and camaraderie.

## Importance of Engagement

Due to the pandemic and project schedule the CPID team interacted with community representatives and gatekeepers rather than the community itself. A public engagement and outreach process with residents about the activities offered onsite will be important to meeting needs, and building trust and community amongst residents of all ages.

Many potential community partners expressed willingness to collaborate with community staff and residents to bring to life art, activities, and other interventions important to the new community. Early relationship-building efforts with these organizations during the construction process will likely provide the best outcomes for future onsite collaboration.



**Context**

## St. Helens Land Genealogy

### Pre-Contact Era

The peoples of the lower Columbia River Valley have lived in present-day Columbia County since time immemorial. Archaeological evidence suggests that the northwest Oregon coast was one of the most populated areas of North America with tens of thousands of inhabitants prior to European contact.

The lowland floodplains of St. Helens and Columbia County were home to many large permanent and seasonal settlements of Chinook peoples. The location along the Columbia River and close proximity to the mouth of the river served as an important site for trade that allowed tribal relations to flourish in the region.

Fishing and hunting were an important way of life for the peoples of the river, aided by skilled woodworking to build canoes, tools, and storage containers. Crop cultivation was also common with the cultivation and harvest of Wapato, Cattails, and acorns for food and fiber.

### Native Displacement

During the contact-era, Indigenous communities proved to be a valuable asset in negotiating relationships between tribal groups, its fur traders, and the Hudson Bay Company that was operating in nearby Fort Vancouver. However, Western diseases brought during contact greatly reduced population numbers for Indigenous communities in the Northwest.

During the 1840's, white settlers began moving into the region via the Oregon Trail. Columbia County, more specifically St. Helens, was identified as a ripe



Map of Indigenous Tribal Regions in NW Oregon



Columbia River Bank



Chinook Man in Canoe on the Columbia River

## Location and Context

St. Helens is a small city of 13,466 people located at the confluence of the Columbia River and Multnomah Channel in the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA Metro Area Census statistical area. It is the county seat and the largest city in Columbia County, Oregon. US Highway 30, and the active rail line that runs alongside it, create a major trucking and rail transportation artery that bisects St. Helens roughly east-west. There are limited safe pedestrian and vehicle crossings to connect these two halves of St. Helens.



## St. Helens Land Genealogy (cont.)

### Colonial History

After white pioneers moved into the area, St. Helens was identified as a location fit for ports and the development of the shipping industry. But the growth of neighboring Portland in the late 1800's proved to be too rapid for the town of roughly 200 people to compete with in large scale industry. With the vast forest landscapes in Columbia County, timber became the main source of industry. Logging and paper mills were the main source of revenue for St. Helens and the county and even supported the economy through The Great Depression. The Post-War era eventually gave way to a decline of the timber industry due to a loss of Old-Growth forest habitat in the region. As across much of Oregon, automation, privatization of forests, and environmental regulation led to the further decline of the timber industry.

### St. Helens Today

Today, the service industry jobs dominate the economic landscape and a majority of workers commute to larger populations like Portland, Beaverton, and Hillsboro. And while the Columbia River was once a major source of industry and economic development for St. Helens, it is increasingly becoming a recreation and tourist destination for folks locally and regionally. St. Helens boasts a large number of well-maintained parks, water access points, and seasonal tourist events that make it attractive for visitors.



St. Helens Historic Courthouse



Timber Processing Plant, 1930



Columbia View Park



Historic Columbia Theater in Downtown St. Helens

location for settlement because of its prime location on the river. As white settlers began moving in, native sovereignty was threatened. While the initial interactions between white settlers and native peoples were peaceful, the Chinook and Clatskanie were ultimately forced out. In an effort to prevent this, local officials and native communities signed the Tansy Point Treaties, allowing native groups to stay on their ancestral lands. However, these treaties were never ratified by the U.S. Congress, and never enforced or upheld. The result was that Native communities were forcibly removed from their lands in order to make way for the construction of railways into the area.

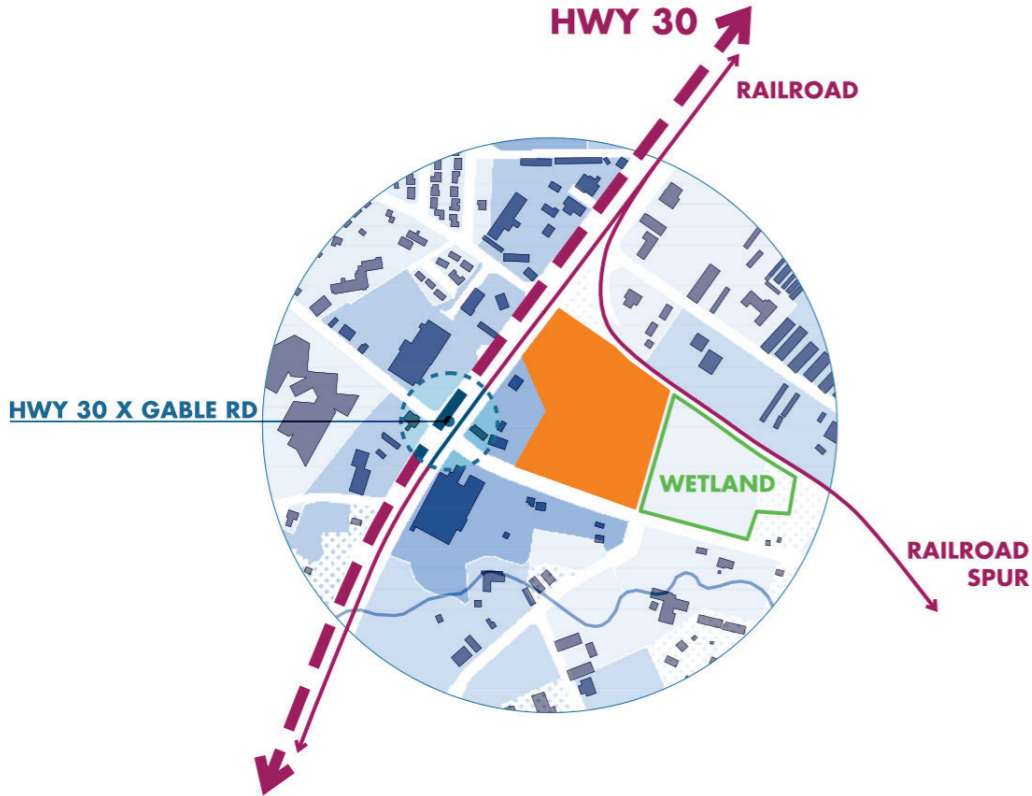
### St. Helens Today

Today, St. Helens still remains a predominantly white community with little to no acknowledgement of its original inhabitants. It is important to acknowledge that while this area is the ancestral territory for the Chinook and Clatskanie peoples, the Chinook tribe is still fighting for federal recognition and sovereignty. The region falls under the umbrella of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, making this region a contested site, and one that should be treated as such— with caution, empathy, and respect.

Across the Columbia River in the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge lies the largest intact archeological site on the lower Columbia and the Cathlapotle Plankhouse honoring the history of the Chinook Nation. Areas in Scappoose Bay and Sauvie Island also contain archeological sites that are threatened by development.

# Site

The project site is located in south St. Helens near the busy intersection of Highway 30 and Gable Road. According to a Columbia County Rail Safety and Mobility Study prepared for the Port of Columbia County, the intersection at Gable Road and Highway 30 is the second busiest intersection in the county by vehicle volume per hour and congestion time delays. A rail line runs past the northwest edge of the site and a railway spur runs along the northern edge. The eastern portion of the project site has a wetland delineation and will be a preserved natural area protected from development. Pedestrian and vehicle access for the complex will be off Gable Road to the south, a two-way arterial street with a protected turn lane. The site is primarily surrounded by commercial and light industrial uses, providing residents with easy access to groceries and other commercial amenities. Walmart and Safeway are major retailers located within short distance of the site. Other close amenities include St. Helens High School, located across Highway 30 on Gable Road, and Columbia Community Mental Health, located across Gable Road. The affordable housing project will be the only residential use in the immediate vicinity, underscoring the importance of a neighborhood feel and adequate community amenities in the design of the complex.



Gable Road looking East.



Designated wetland area on East edge of site.



Intersection at Gable Road and Highway 30.



Railroad tracks running along Highway 30.

# Demographics

# Demographic Data

The following information reflects demographic information for St. Helens, including, race, age, education, economic, and transportation trends. All demographic data provided came from the U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey for 2018 and the Portland State University Center for Population Research.

St Helens has an estimated population of 13,446 as of 2018 and lies within the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA Metro Area Census statistical area.

## Race and Ethnicity

Oregon was adopted into the union as a Black-exclusionary state. This history of discriminatory practice and policy coupled with Indigenous displacement has created and perpetuated a system of white supremacy and inequality still felt in Oregon today in the demographic make-up of the state. At 75.1 percent, Oregon has a higher proportion of white residents than the United States as a whole at 60.6 percent. In St. Helens, the population is even more homogenous than the state, with 84.7 percent of the population identifying as white alone. The Hispanic or Latinx population is the largest minority ethnic or racial group in St. Helens at 8 percent, followed by two or more races at 3.8 percent.

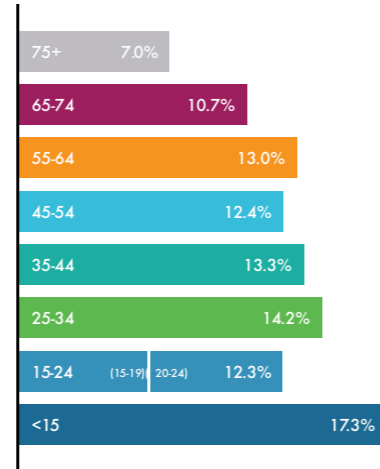
## Language

In St. Helens, 95.4 percent of residents speak English only and over half of the population that speaks another language also speak English 'very well.' The second most commonly spoken language in St. Helens is Spanish, at 3.1 percent. Roughly half of Spanish-speakers in the area do not also speak English.

## ST. HELENS

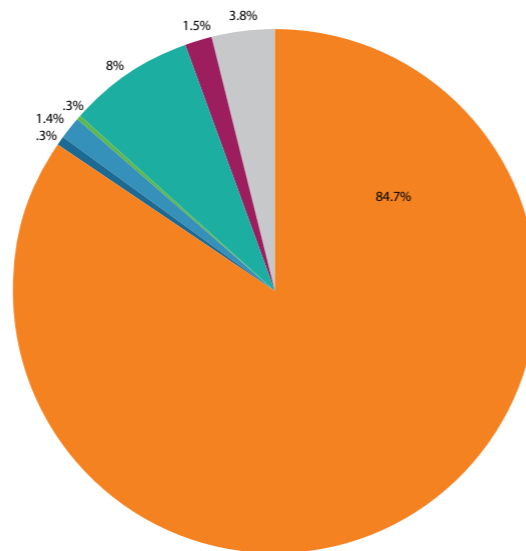


### POPULATION

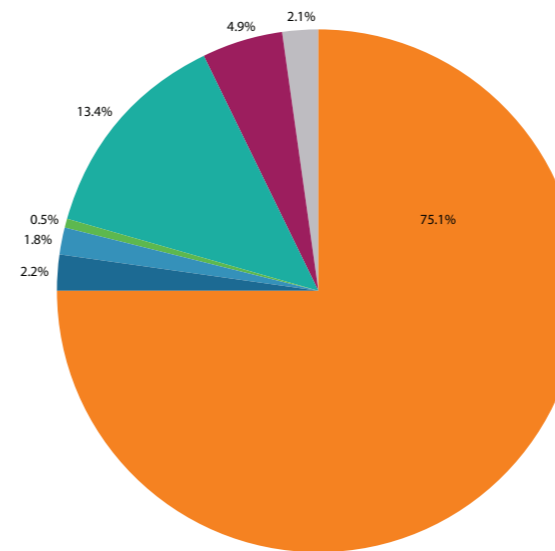
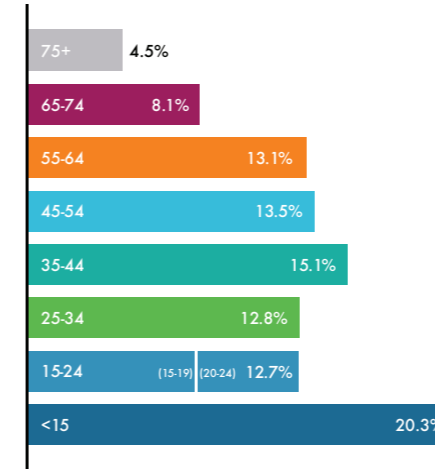


### AGE

### RACE/ETHNICITY



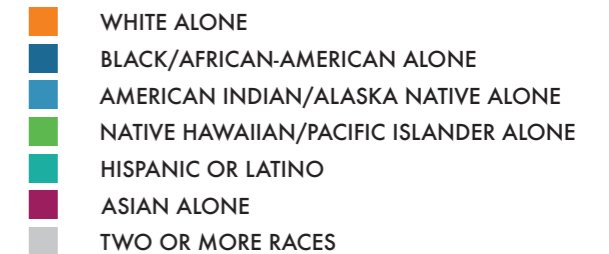
## OREGON



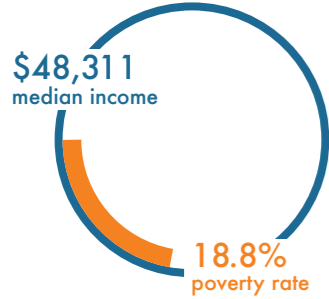
## Economic Development & Employment Today

Given the proximity to larger employment centers like Portland and its larger suburbs of Hillsboro & Beaverton, many St. Helens residents make the approximately 40-minute commute to work to these areas either via public transit, or more likely by car. For those that work in St. Helens, a majority are employed in the educational services, and health care and social assistance (17.3%), manufacturing (16.4%), and retail (14.8%) sectors.

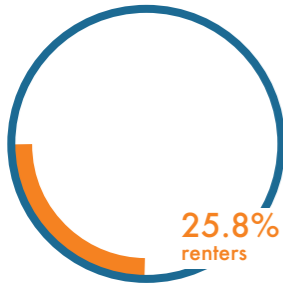
While the timber industry has seen significant decline in northwest Oregon due to mismanaged forests and environmental protections, manufacturing and the shipping industry still play a vital role in the St. Helens community.



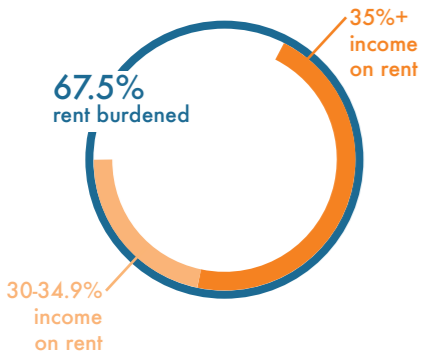
## ST. HELENS



### INCOME



### HOUSING TENURE



### RENT AS % OF INCOME

## Age and Family Dynamics

The average age of St. Helens residents is younger, at 37.7, than the rest of Oregon at 39.7. Households with children under age 18 make up a large portion of St. Helens households compared to the state overall, at 38.1 and 26.9 percent, respectively. Single parent families account for 14.9 percent of all households in St. Helens (10.2 percent female head of household, 4.7 percent male head of household). A large number of St. Helens residents live alone (27.6 percent) and seniors over age 65 account for a large number of single person households.

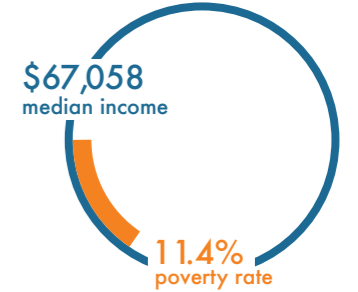
## Income and Housing

The median household income in St. Helens is just 72 percent of the state median income and the poverty level is 7.4 percent higher than the state as a whole.

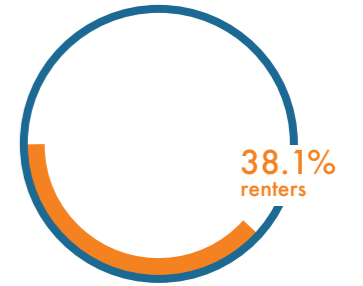
The housing market in St Helens is tight, with a rental vacancy rate of just 0.9 percent. A low vacancy rate indicates that demand for housing is high, and that potentially the housing stock is low. Nationally, low cost units are least likely to be vacant and this is especially true in West Coast metro areas, according to studies by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University.

A majority of renters in St. Helens (67.5%) spend over 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs. Households spending this amount on rent are classified by HUD as 'rent burdened' and households are considered 'severely rent burdened' when paying over 50 percent of their income on rent. HUD estimates that the "median renter in the lowest income quintile pays 56 percent of monthly income on rent," meaning that the poorest families are often spending over half their earnings on housing costs, leaving little income left for other expenses. Additionally, according to HUD renters on the West Coast of the United States experience higher rates of rent burden than any other region and households with children under age 18 are far more likely to be severely rent burdened. Rent burdens over the last 15 years have increased across the country as incomes have stagnated and housing costs have continued to increase.

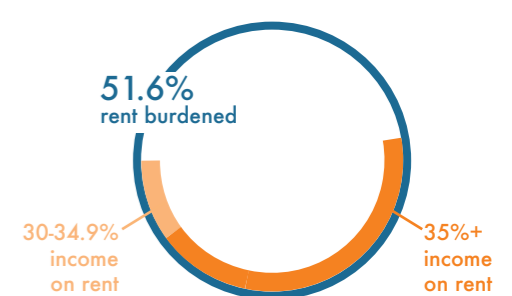
## OREGON



### INCOME



### HOUSING TENURE



### RENT AS % OF INCOME

The available census data for St Helens does not break down gross rent as a percentage of household income (GRAPI) above 35 percent. However, given the high percentage of households with children, combined with lower median incomes and higher poverty rate in the area, it is likely that a majority of the 47.5 percent of renters in St Helens paying over 35 percent of their income toward rent would actually be classified as severely rent burdened. These factors would indicate that a large number of renters in St Helens face steep barriers to housing stability.

## Education

Educational attainment in St. Helens is lower than the average for the state of Oregon as a whole. Of St. Helens residents over age 25, 12.4 percent do not have a high school diploma or equivalent compared to 8.7 percent for Oregon. In St. Helens 34.2 percent of people hold a high school diploma or equivalent only, 30.5 percent have completed some college (with no degree), 9.1 percent hold an associate degree, and 13.8 percent hold a Bachelor degree or higher.

# **Community Resources**



# Mapping Community Assets

The project research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic which limited the teams ability to engage with the community at large and potential future residents of the housing complex. Because of this, the team relied on interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, online research, and site visits to identify and map assets available to the future tenants. Access to and collaboration with existing community resources and services is important to the success of the new affordable housing community planned for St. Helens.

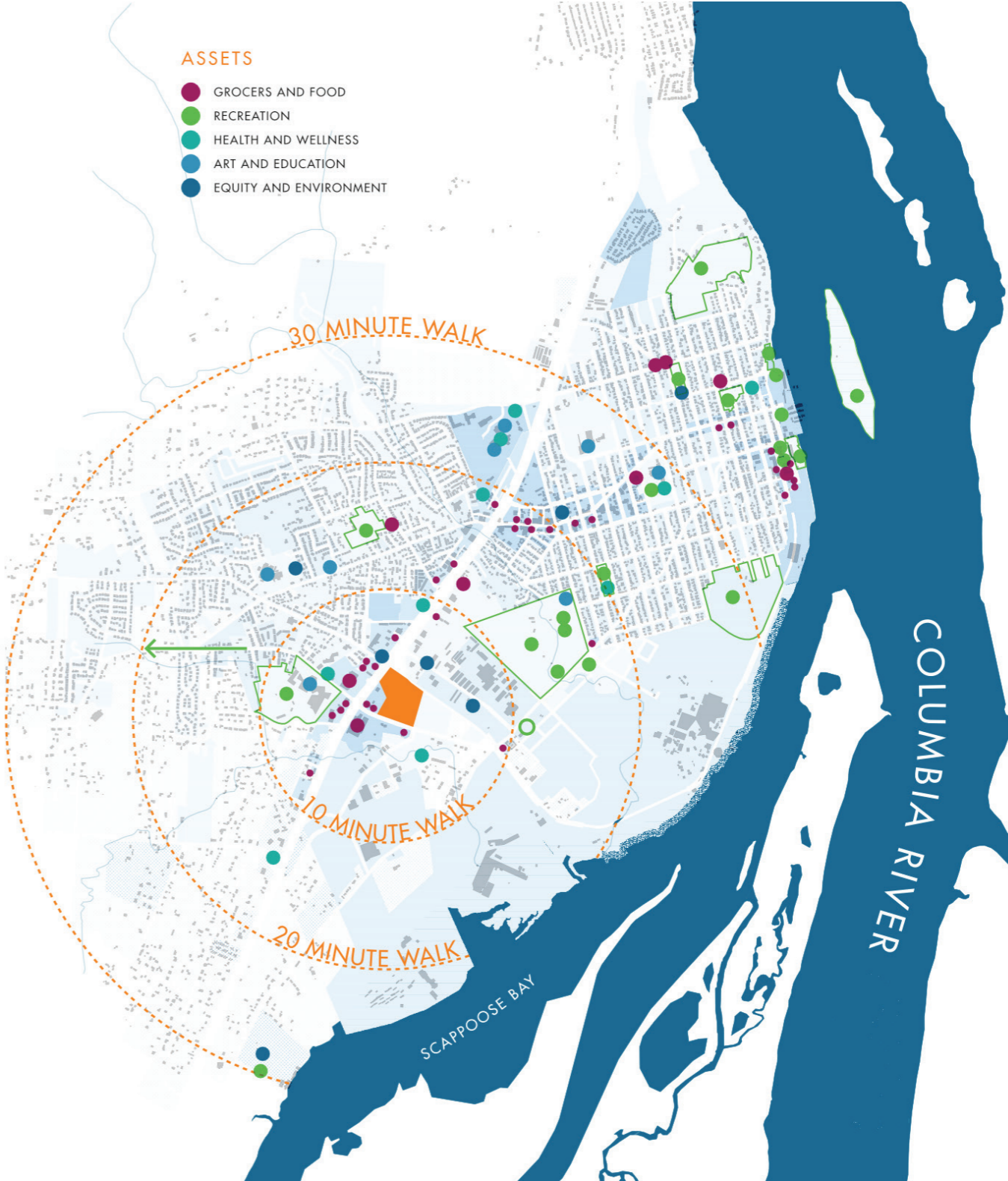
### Goals

Identify key community assets and social services in the community surrounding the site, prioritize collaboration with organizations whose programs are rooted in equity and empowerment, and identify service gaps.

### Findings

There is an abundance of existing assets in St. Helens, though there are relatively few within a short walking distance of the site. Distance, railway lines, and lack of pedestrian and bike infrastructure present barriers to access for many resources in St Helens. Additional transportation accommodations such as more frequent public transit service and ADA compliant infrastructure will be necessary for older adults with mobility issues, disabled populations, as well as anyone with a child in a stroller, to access a majority of assets in St Helens. Sidewalks, bike infrastructure and additional safe rail crossings will greatly improve site access to resources.

There is a lack of formal and specific resources in St. Helens and Columbia County for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and non-English-speaking communities. The BIPOC population in the area is small compared to other regions in Oregon, but systemic racism and exclusion persist in the state, and support for these communities will be vital to an equitable and inclusive housing community. Most culturally-specific organizations and programming for the BIPOC community are located in neighboring Multnomah and Washington counties.



# Community Connections

Outreach was condensed early in the project to provide the design team with necessary feedback prior to project delivery deadlines.

## A Pandemic Community Outreach Process

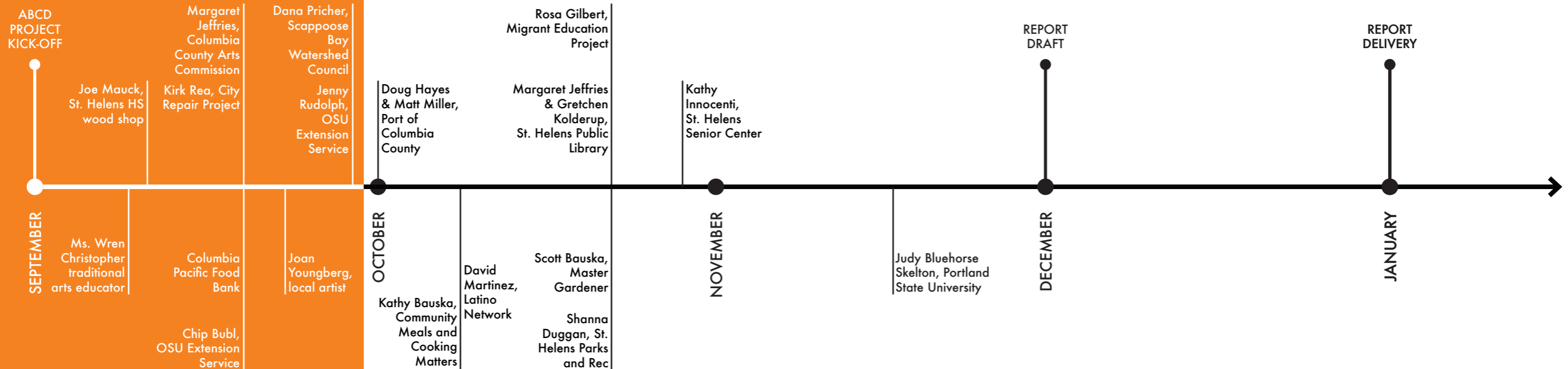
The St. Helens' public engagement process was hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic. The team relied on video, phone, and email conversations with community experts and organizations to reflect the needs of the overall St. Helens community. We acknowledge that this digital engagement process was unable to reach future residents, but relying on these embedded organizations allowed us to identify the needs and gaps.

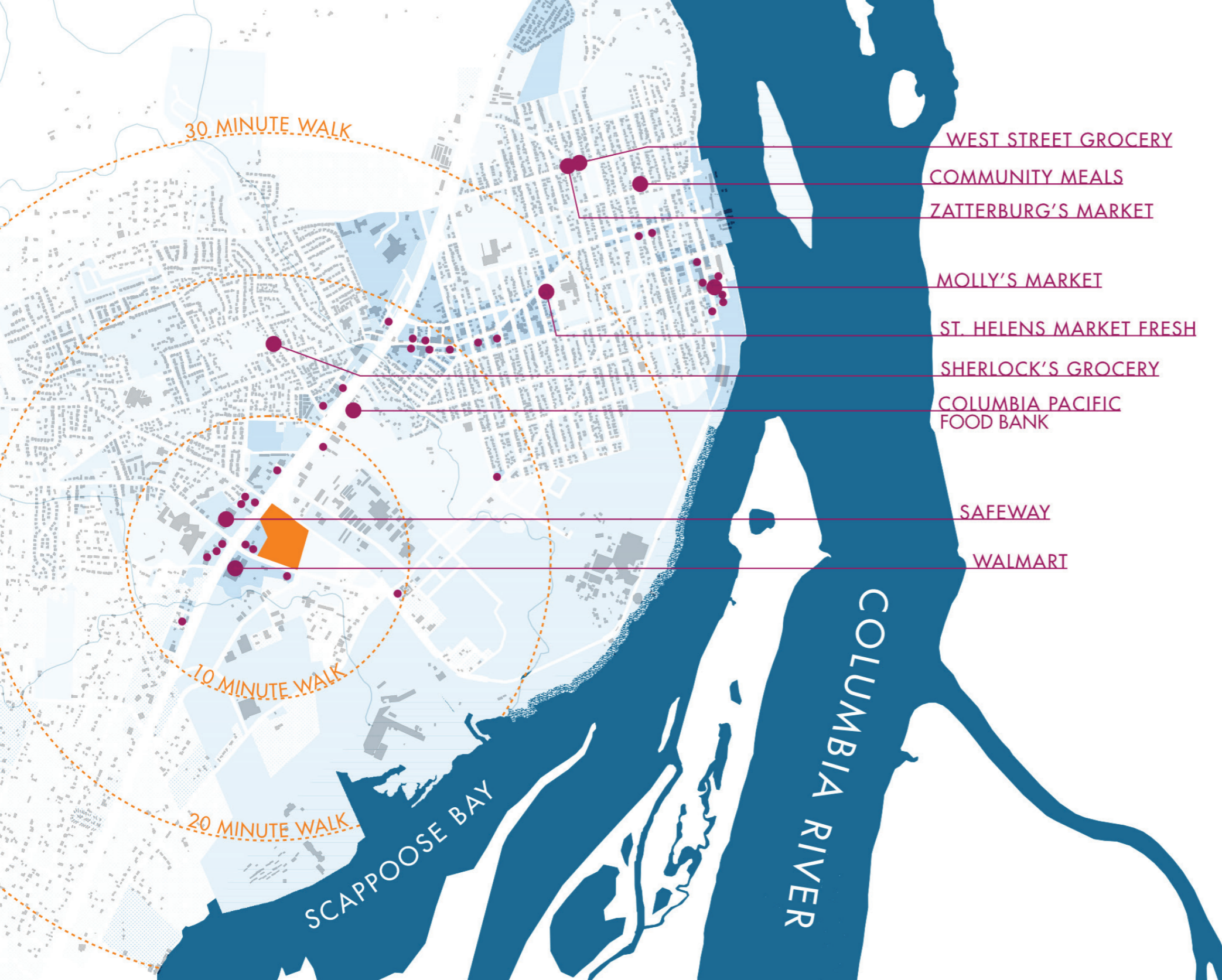
The ABCD team identified initial community members and organizations for outreach through online research and recommendations from Nina Reed at the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority (NOHA). Our focus was on identifying potential education, health, recreation, and arts resources for future residents. The team also prioritized design feedback from Indigenous and Latinx leadership, and older adult resource providers

to help create a community that feels safe and welcoming to more marginalized populations. Each contact we made often resulted in additional folks to reach out to.

During our connections with Columbia Community Mental Health (CCMH) they expressed a strong desire for collaboration with the housing complex and they also indicated that mental health services available in the county do not cover the extent of the need. We recommend that CDP and EngAGE connect with groups that we were unable to connect to in the research process, like Medicine Wheel Recovery Services and Columbia Health Services in the future to understand how to support the health of future residents. Partnerships with a variety of organizations focused on mental health and healthcare would be most beneficial to residents.

Additionally, the ABCD team was regrettably unable to reach out to marginalized populations in Columbia County and St. Helens directly. As the mantra goes, 'nothing for us without us,' and as such the team recommends a robust community feedback and placemaking effort be executed once residents are identified during or after construction. Allowing for residents to weigh in on art, programming priorities, and processes will ultimately serve the community best. All recommendations put forth by the ABCD team are made with what information, community input and expertise we had available as of publication, but are by no means conclusive without the input of future residents.





## Mapping Food Assets

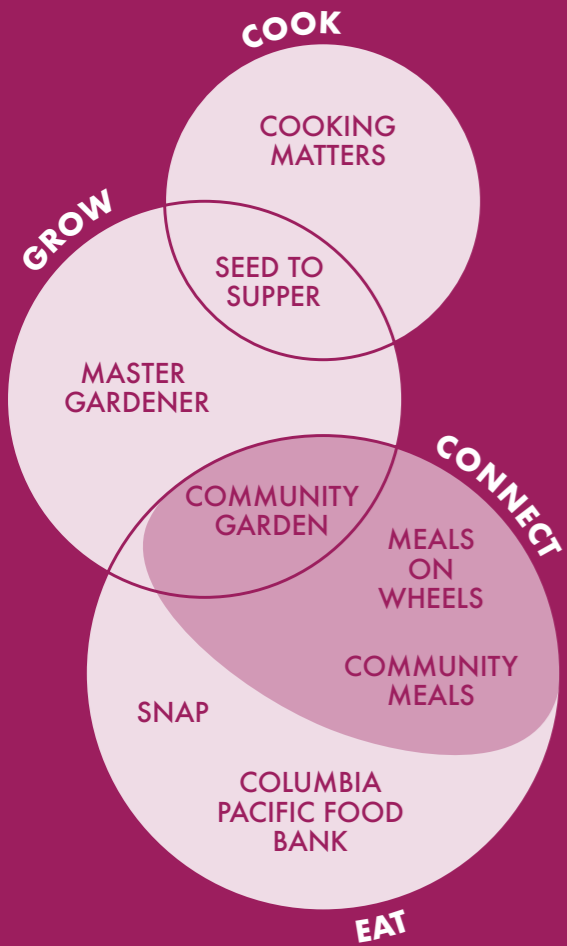
Food and groceries are easily accessible near the project site with Safeway and Walmart both within .2 miles, a short walking distance, but close proximity to grocery stores is not sufficient to build food security in the St. Helens affordable housing community. According to the Oregon Food Bank, one in nine Oregonians faces food insecurity, defined as lack of access to a sufficient amount of affordable, nutritious food. 58 percent of households receiving food from network food banks are also enrolled in the SNAP program and 18 percent of clients are 65 and older.

Because a large number of the future residents of the St. Helens affordable housing complex would likely be considered food insecure, connections with community food resources will provide great benefit to the housing community. Many additional food support services are available in St. Helens, though not closely accessible to the site. Columbia Pacific Food Bank is located within a 10-minute walking radius of the site, though the actual walking distance is over 20 minutes due to the presence of a rail line along highway-30 and a railway spur on the north end of the site.

CPID reached out to these community food resources and organizations like OSU Extension Service, Columbia Pacific Food Bank, and Community Meals to learn what services could be made available to future residents on-site to support healthy food access to the community. Bringing food resources onsite within the framework of the community can help eliminate barriers to food access like transportation, time, and shame that people can feel visiting traditional food pantries.



# Food Resources Connections



## OSU Extension Service

The OSU Extension Service has an office in St. Helens and its many food-focused programs that could benefit future residents. Jenny Rudolph with OSU Extension was enthusiastic about the possibility of bringing their programming to the St. Helens affordable housing site, and CPID recommends connecting with Jenny to collaborate in these efforts.

### Seed to Supper

The Seed to Supper program provides instruction and resources for home gardeners accompanied by a cooking class centered around teaching participants how to cook the produce in their garden plots. The provision of fenced, on-site garden(s) and community kitchen(s) will enable this class to be offered at the affordable housing complex.

### Master Gardener

There are nearly 40 certified master gardeners in Columbia County through the OSU Extension Service Master Gardener program. After completing the program, master gardeners (MG) agree to volunteer their time educating the wider community about horticulture and gardening. They can assist with gardening questions over the phone but CPID recommends building relationships with MGs in St. Helens to provide more hands-on support to the community. The Columbia County MG network could provide seasonal office hours onsite, organized garden visits, and could potentially help beginning gardeners as they set up their garden plots.

Scott Bauska, one master gardener we interviewed, recommended that management of the future complex support residents with

tools and supplies, like soil and seeds, to get started on their garden plots. Lack of resources for tools and soil amendment are often barriers to first-time gardeners.

### Cooking Matters

Cooking Matters is a program collaboration between OSU Extension Service and the Columbia Pacific Food Bank. Cooking Matters teaches participants basic kitchen skills and how to cook healthy meals at home. There is strong interest in bringing the class to residents onsite in the instructional community kitchen if there is significant interest.

on Wheels contract for the area through Community Action Team (CAT). Meals on Wheels could be a valuable resource for the seniors living at the St. Helens affordable housing complex. Kathy Innocenti at the St. Helens Senior Center indicated the desire to collaborate on programming and provide assistance in signing residents up for the senior center services.



*“There are a ton of food services that can be tapped into so long as folks are aware of and comfortable accessing them.”*

**Jenny Rudolph, OSU Extension Service**

### Community Meals

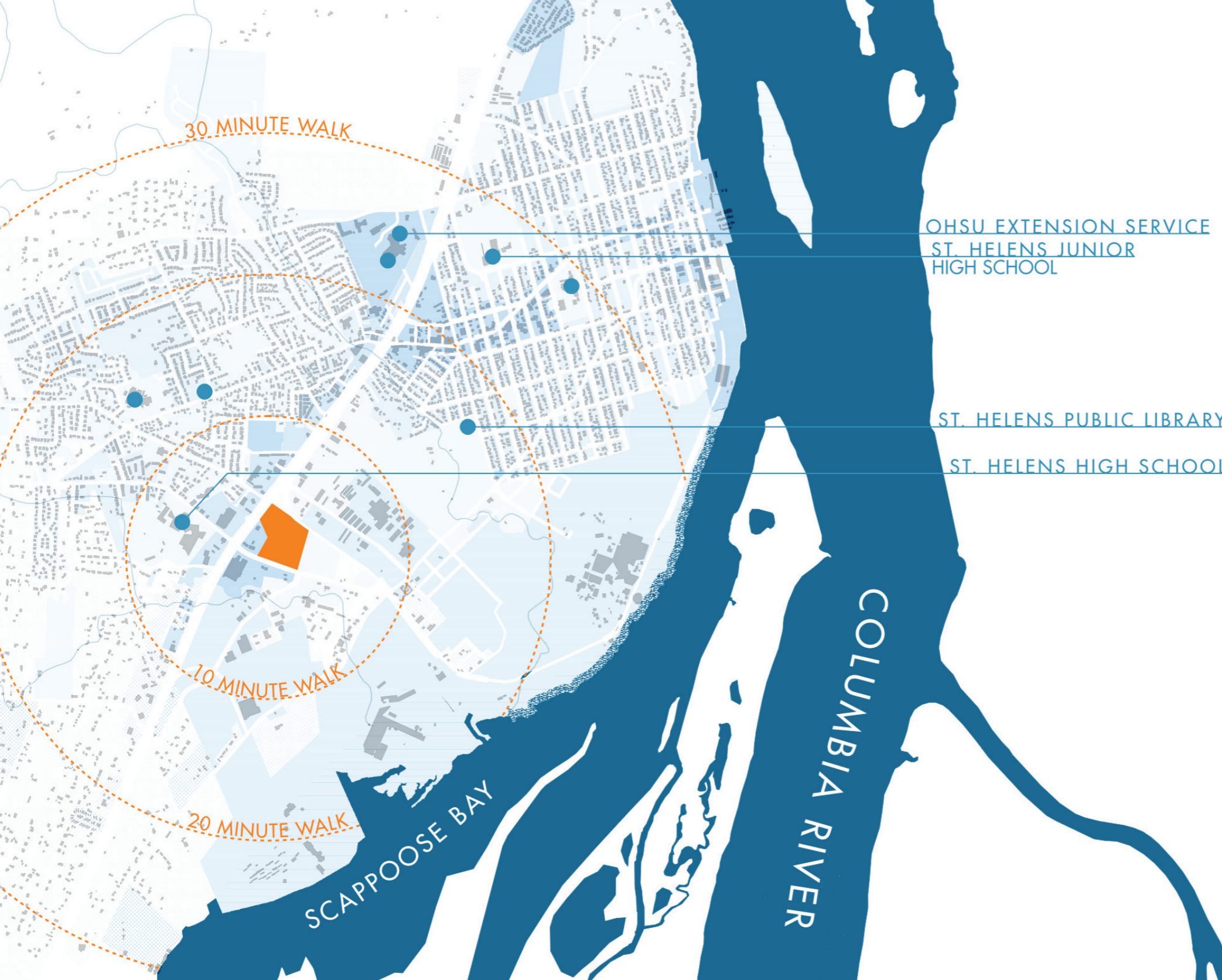
Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Community Meals (CM) served weekly prepared meals at First Lutheran Church in St. Helens. Up to 120 hot meals were served in a friendly, community environment. Over the years service at CM evolved into a social event for guests, especially seniors, with the gathering of friends and occasionally live music. Kathy Bauska of CM indicated that a similar event could be held at the St. Helens affordable housing complex if a robust community kitchen with two heavy-duty ranges and ovens were available with adjacent gathering space. Creating a sit-down meal service open to all could build community and connection onsite while providing meals to those in need. Kathy Bauska and Joan Youngberg are community members to reach out to for information on Community Meals.

### Columbia Pacific Food Bank

The Columbia Pacific Food Bank serves Columbia County with supplemental food support. CPID recommends connecting with the food bank to set up a weekly Fresh Alliance produce delivery to a central location onsite, like the commons building, to ensure that all residents have access to fresh food regardless of mobility and transportation resources available to them.

### St. Helens Senior Center

The St. Helens Senior Center holds the Meals



## Mapping Arts and Education Assets

Arts and education resources in St. Helens are abundant, but most available programs and organizations are not located close to the project site. The St. Helens Public Library is located at the north corner of McCormick Park and offers literacy and recreation, as well as STEM, arts & crafts programs. The St. Helens Recreation Center building is located .9 miles away, a 17 minute walk down Gable and Old Portland Roads.

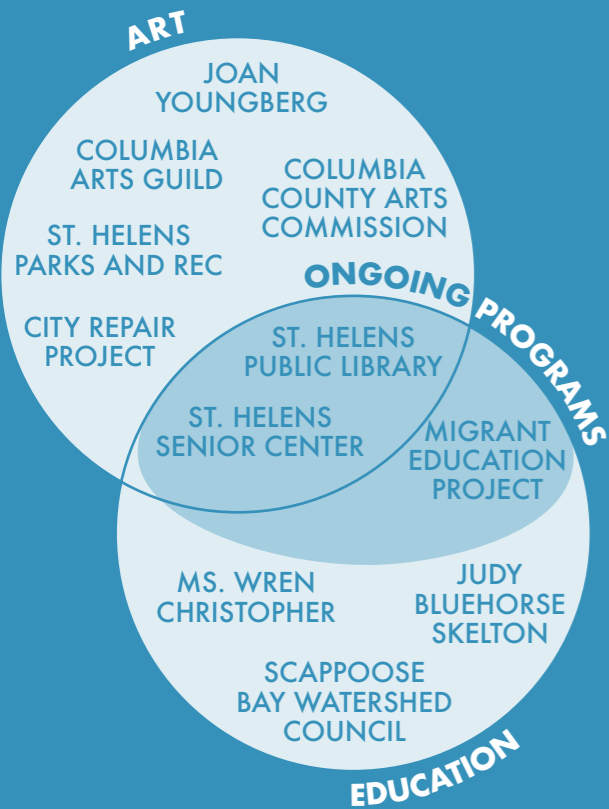
Downtown St. Helens is where a lot of the arts and cultural resources are located. St. Helens boasts a number of seasonal arts and culture events, like the Halloweentown festival each fall and the 13 Nights concert series. Year round assets downtown include the historic Columbia Theater and the Columbia County Museum.

Regionally, there are community colleges and jobs training programs available. In Scappoose, the Portland Community College (PCC) Training Center with Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center (OMIC) provides workforce training focused on skilled manufacturing programs and apprenticeships. PCC Rock Creek campus in Washington County is the closest traditional community college to St. Helens offering 14 career tech programs, outdoor learning environments, and resources for multicultural, LGBTQIA+, and veteran students.

Partnering with key community organizations and local residents to bring art and education installations and programming to the St. Helens affordable housing community would greatly increase the likelihood of resident participation in these efforts.



# Arts and Education Connections



## St. Helens Public Library

The St. Helens Public Library (SHPL) has a large number of services it provides beyond book lending. There is a 'library of things' to check out like kitchen, craft, and tech equipment, cultural passes to access museums and parks in the region, and computer tutoring. Various clubs also find a home at the library, including the Anime, Ukulele, Genealogy, and 'Fiber Fanatics' clubs. CPID recommends reaching out to library staff to collaborate for onsite programming for residents of all ages.

### Mobile Programming for Children and Families

Gretchen Kolderup, the Youth Librarian at SHPL, expressed great enthusiasm for bringing youth and family-centered programming to the housing complex and organize onsite. Some examples of existing mobile programming include storytime read alouds, 'story strolls' (picture books placed outdoors to be read a page at a time as you walk along a path), STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) focused classes, and arts and craft classes. They are also open to collaborating with residents on program ideas that fit community needs.

### Mobile Programming for Adults

Margaret Jeffries, the Library Director, indicated that the lack of accessible mid-sized meeting spaces in St. Helens hinders the number of classes and groups that the SHPL can support. If a moderate-sized meeting space were available at the housing complex with technology available, WiFi, and adequate sound equipment, the library could potentially host seminars, classes, and clubs onsite.

## Migrant Education Project

The Migrant Education Project at Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES D) provides educational support and parental engagement with children of qualifying agriculture, fishing, and timber industry workers. Rosa Gilbert with Migrant Education mentioned the desire to collaborate with future management at the St. Helens affordable housing complex for potential educational programming if a community gathering space with easy wifi access, presentation equipment, and access to a kitchen were available. They also desired the use of an office space for social worker visits.

interest in being involved in the labelling of native plants along the wetland trail at the St. Helens affordable housing project.



## Local Artists: Joan Youngberg

Margaret Jeffries with the Columbia County Arts Commission recommended a number of local artists who might be interested in collaborating with the St. Helens affordable housing project on resident-based art installations. CPID connected with Joan Youngberg, a local artist, who has experience organizing community-based arts projects in St. Helens. For a

*"that is super within the mission of the library... and it's a way to meet the needs of a big group of people"*  
[about bringing library youth programming onsite]

### Gretchen Kolderup, Youth Librarian

previous project, in collaboration with the Columbia Arts Guild, titled 'This is Us St. Helens' Joan sourced paintings about 'home' from residents across the city to assemble into one large art installation publicly displayed in downtown St. Helens. Joan believes making a community art project for the St. Helens affordable housing complex where each resident gets the opportunity to contribute a piece could be excellent for bringing the community together and could teach residents a lot about each other. Joan is also a master gardener and has expressed interest in supporting the resident gardeners onsite.

CPID recommends reaching out to the Columbia County Arts Commission and

## Ms. Wren Christopher

Ms. Wren Christopher is a traditional arts educator based in Columbia County. She is a part of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and intimately connected with the Indigenous community and history in St. Helens. Ms. Christopher has expressed concern about the lack of a native cultural advisor on the project. She has indicated the importance of offering healing and restoration through landscape with the incorporation of native plantings that have significance to the tribes of the region. Additionally the labeling of these plants could provide rich educational opportunities to residents of all ages. She has expressed

Columbia Arts Guild to connect with local artists for onsite projects like murals, installations, and to see about the potential to host local art events or classes onsite.

## The City Repair Project

The City Repair Project is an organization focused on facilitating artistic and ecological place-making with the help of volunteer staff and citizen involvement. Their community intersection painting projects help neighbors come together and build community. Kirk Rea, the co-executive director of the City Repair Project indicated his willingness to collaborate or advise on parking lot and pedestrian crossing painting projects at the St. Helens Affordable Housing complex. CPID recommends collaborating with The City Repair Project to help facilitate this effort onsite.



**“When you have five thousand people in the community who have bought into a project, who is going to tell you ‘no, you can’t do this.’?” [about the success of community art projects in SH]**

**Joan Youngberg, Local Artist**

## Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council (SBWC) was created in tandem with other regional watershed councils in Oregon to help support native salmon recovery. Dana Pricher at the SBWC indicated that they are available to be a resource to the landscape architect on the project in the development of a native plants list best suited to the site. They

also indicated their desire for expanding their outreach and education programs, but lack of community gathering spaces adjacent to outdoor areas has made this effort difficult. CPID recommends that future management reach out to SBWC to see how the commons building meeting and gathering spaces could host their future programming.

## Judy BlueHorse Skelton

Judy BlueHorse Skelton is a professor at Portland State University in the Indigenous Nations Studies department.

The main focal points of her work are on ecology as a healing modality and how plants are medicine, and reclaiming land to become edible landscapes for future generations and emergency use. Her deep knowledge of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge (ITEK) could be a beneficial resource to the labeling of plants along the wetland trail and the development of the indigenous gathering circle currently indicated in the site plan. If the Indigenous landscaping project is implemented onsite, she sees the potential opportunity to bring students together alongside residents to learn about native plants in the future.



“This is Us St. Helens” Community Art Installation



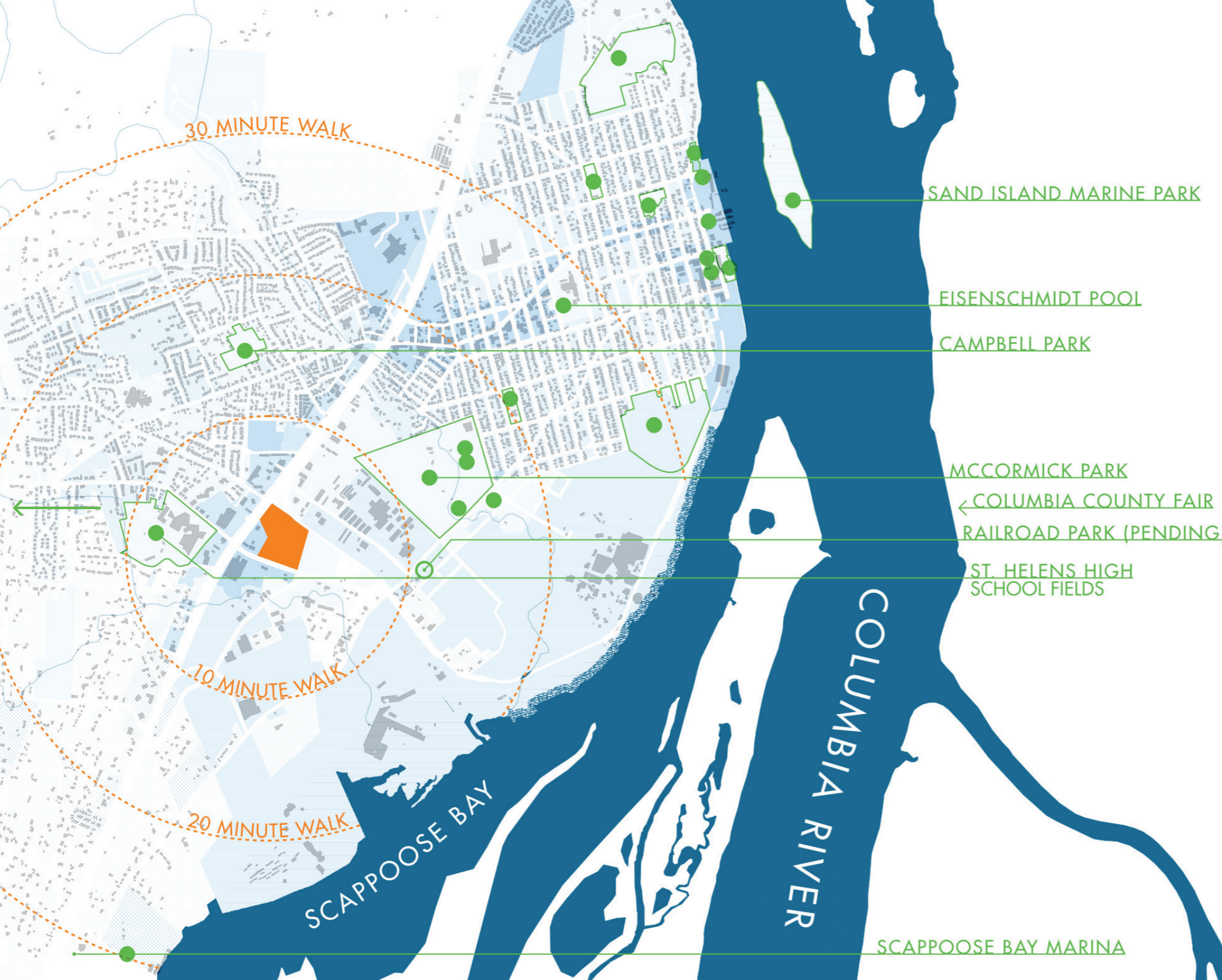
The City Repair Project Street Painting Project



Local artist Joan Youngberg at the “This is Us St. Helens” Community Art Installation Opening Reception



The City Repair Project Street Painting Project



## Mapping Recreation Assets

The natural beauty and resources of St. Helens and Columbia County offer ample outdoor recreation opportunities.

St. Helens has a strong parks system, with over 135 acres of park land across 13 parks available to residents. A wide range of amenities are available for sports, leisure, camping, nature walks, and play structures. St. Helens' location along the Columbia River also provides for public boat launch access at a number of public parks. Other recreation opportunities in town include the newly established St. Helens Rec Center with low-cost activities for residents of all ages, sports leagues, and a bowling alley.

Elsewhere in Columbia County there are ample opportunities for camping, biking, and water-based recreation activities like boating and fishing. The Banks-Vernonia Trail and the Crown Z Trail have turned old logging roads and railroad beds into a network of bike trails between Scappoose and Vernonia through rural Columbia County. These trails offer safe biking opportunities for experienced and novice cyclists alike.

Potential barriers in place for use of these more far-flung natural amenities by residents of the St. Helens affordable housing project are a potential lack of transportation access and cost of outdoor equipment. Additional barriers are shown to exist for BIPOC communities accessing outdoor recreation because of the overall history of exclusion and segregation in the United States. Until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Black communities were banned from visiting public spaces like National and State Parks in much of the U.S. and the trauma of exclusion and fear of violence still contribute to Black communities and other people of color not engaging in more remote recreational activities. According





## Recreation Connections

to the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service, “although people of color make up nearly 40 percent of the total U.S. population, close to 70 percent of people who visit national forests, national wildlife refuges, and national parks are white, while Black people remain the most dramatically underrepresented group in these spaces” (National Health Foundation). Historic lack of access to jobs that provide adequate compensation, paid leave, etc. have also contributed to a legacy of underrepresentation in outdoor activities and spaces for BIPOC communities. The white-washing of history and the violent legacy of colonialism have also stripped Indigenous communities of their land and a majority of people of the knowledge of the true history of outdoor spaces. While no housing project or programming can fix the systems in place, acknowledging this history is important in the development of outdoor spaces in order to be inclusive of all communities.

Providing for things like Indigenous acknowledgement and history, gardening, sports, and allowing safe spaces for large family gatherings and barbecues onsite can help make the outdoor spaces at the housing complex safe and welcoming for all. Potentially providing opportunities for access to transportation and equipment for outdoor activities like swimming, boating, fishing, and camping could help open the door for some residents to experience the great outdoors beyond their immediate neighborhood.

## Parks and Outdoor Access

The closest public parks to the site are Campbell Park to the northwest, and McCormick Park to the northeast.

The entrance to McCormick Park takes roughly 20 minutes (1.1 miles) to reach by foot on a busy road with little to no sidewalk infrastructure. Additionally, the path to McCormick Park passes by the Columbia County Sheriff station and the Columbia County Jail which could present real or perceived safety barriers to certain populations. McCormick Park provides a rich array of amenities in a mostly forested setting. Activities range from camping, disc golf trails and skate park to softball fields, playgrounds and picnic shelters.



“Put as much info out there as possible... break down the stigma of affordable housing and emphasize that the site will be a hub for the community to come together.”

**Shanna Duggan, St. Helens Rec Center**

Campbell Park is an approximately 23 minute (1.1 mile) walk. Pedestrians must cross the busy intersection of Highway 30 and the train tracks at Gable Road and a walk down Highway 30 to reach it. Amenities at Campbell park are focused around sport courts and fields, and picnic areas.

According to conversations with the Port of Columbia County, a new park is being planned on the southeast side of Old Portland Road, across from the Columbia County Sheriff station. This future park would likely provide forested mountain bike trails and be the closest to the site.

While the public parks in St. Helens are a great community resource, access to adequate recreation opportunities within the complex will do the most for resident health and wellbeing. Access to low-impact, social activities could provide great benefit to the large number of seniors who will be living onsite. A play area and spaces designated for sport will provide opportunities for children and adolescents to get exercise and socialize safely close to home. Supporting transportation to parks further away could also be a huge resource to individuals and families without personal vehicles. Additionally, reaching out to and partnering with local organizations that already develop recreational activities would provide residents with a wide variety of ways to be healthy and connect with each other.

## St. Helens Parks and Recreation

Shanna Duggan, the director of the St. Helens Recreation Center (SHRC), indicated that because the center is relatively new, they have been heavily focused on building partnerships in the community. The SHRC hosts a number of programs at their facility and off site for children and teens including play groups,

camps, yoga classes, walking groups, and fly-fishing tying. All activities are low-cost, but they are also working on developing a scholarship and sliding scale payment system to reach more community members. Their mobile activity van allows most programs to travel well, and, due to the lack of indoor gathering and play spaces in town, the SHRC would be interested to host some of their programming at the St. Helens affordable housing complex.

CPID recommends connecting with the SHRC about the potential for hosting youth activities, 'tot sports,' exercise classes, and walking groups onsite.

### Space Needs

To operate onsite SHRC would require that events be open to the community at large, not just residents of the complex. Most important to onsite operations are easily cleanable surfaces, movable furniture, access to a sink, and easily accessible WIFI. Additional desires for onsite operation would be a lockable cabinet to store supplies and a small desk area to set up their computer check-in system.

### OSU Extension Services

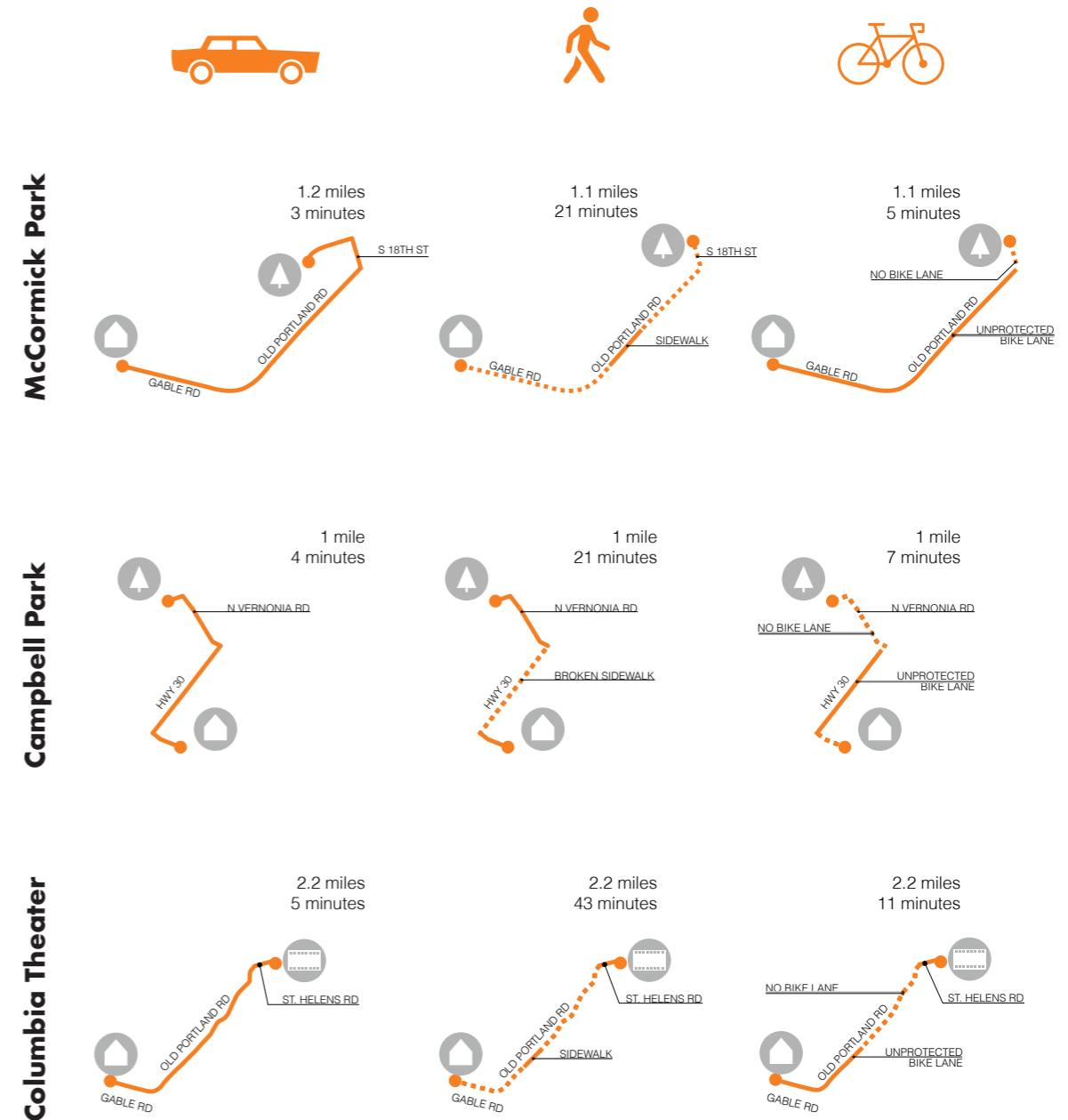
The Walk with Ease program through OSU Extension Service is a social walking group for seniors. The program in St.

Helens has been on hold because of lack of safe, accessible walking routes in town. If the wetland trail at the St. Helens affordable housing project is designed to be accessible for individuals using walkers, wheelchairs, and scooters there is significant interest in making it the new location for this program.

### St. Helens Senior Center

The SHSC offers a variety of recreational activities in their building, like Tai Chi, billiards, and gardening. They have never hosted programming offsite, but expressed interest in collaborating on programming and activities with a large senior living area like the one planned at the St. Helens affordable housing complex. CPID recommends reaching out to SHCS to help coordinate and collaborate on programming. This could help build a sense of community between seniors living on and off site.

## Site Access Diagrams





## Mapping Health and Wellness Assets

There are few clinics available in St. Helens and no medical centers available for labor and delivery or severe illness and injury, for access to these services patients must travel to Portland, Washington County, or Longview, Washington. Public transportation within St. Helens and regionally is limited and, according to ACS 2019 data, 11.3 percent of households in St. Helens do not own a personal vehicle. Access to medical treatment could be a significant barrier to the low-income families and seniors living at the St. Helens affordable housing complex.

### Healthcare

Columbia Health Services clinic is the closest physical health facility to the site, it is a roughly 8 minute walk and two minute drive to travel the .3 miles to the clinic down Gable Road. Due to proximity and services provided, this clinic will be a valuable resource to the St. Helens affordable housing community.

### Mental Health

Mental health services and substance use disorder treatment are available locally in St. Helens. Columbia County Mental Health (CCMH), a non-profit focused on behavioral healthcare access, is located .2 miles away across Gable Road. Medicine Wheel Recovery Services located one mile south of the site also provides mental health and substance use disorder treatment with additional support services for the unique cultural experiences of the Indigenous community.



# Health and Wellness Connections

LONGVIEW, WA  
PEACEHEALTH  
KAISER PERMANENTE



OHSU  
LEGACY EMANUEL  
PROVIDENCE PORTLAND  
VETERAN'S HOSPITAL  
ADVENTIST HOSPITAL  
KAISER PERMANENTE  
PROVIDENCE ST. VINCENT  
LEGACY GOOD SAMARITAN

PORTLAND, OR

## St. Helens Senior Center

SHSC offers AARP Medicare enrollment seminars and assistance to seniors. During the interview with SHSC Director Kathy Innocenti, she indicated that transportation services to medical appointments, both in town and regionally, are lacking for seniors in St. Helens. Support for residents needing to access medical care is crucial to seniors without cars or family in the area.

## Community Action Team

The Community Action Team (CAT) is a local anti-poverty agency working within Columbia County. They provide a wide-range of services from housing support-homeownership, mortgage & rent assistance, utility assistance, housing rehabilitation, and homeless transitional housing. They also provide services specifically for older adult populations and veterans, such as connecting with Meals on Wheels and other senior services in the community. In addition, CAT also provides children and housing services which include enrollment in Head Start, child abuse prevention services, and parent education programs.

## Columbia Community Mental Health Center

Columbia County Mental Health Center is a county-provided service specializing in mental health and substance abuse services. They offer a 24/7 crisis hotline, children & adult services focusing on mental health and

substance abuse. Because this is a publicly-funded clinic, they require that all patients have an acceptable insurance provider in order to access their services, which could be a barrier to residents of the housing complex.

## Recommended Future Connections

The CPID team was unable to connect with the following community resources, but recommends that future management at the St. Helens affordable housing complex reach out to find ways to bring health resources onsite and/or support residents accessing available programs.



*“We Just need more support across the board, there’s always gaps in mental health services”*

**Todd Jacobson, Columbia Community Mental Health**

**NARA**

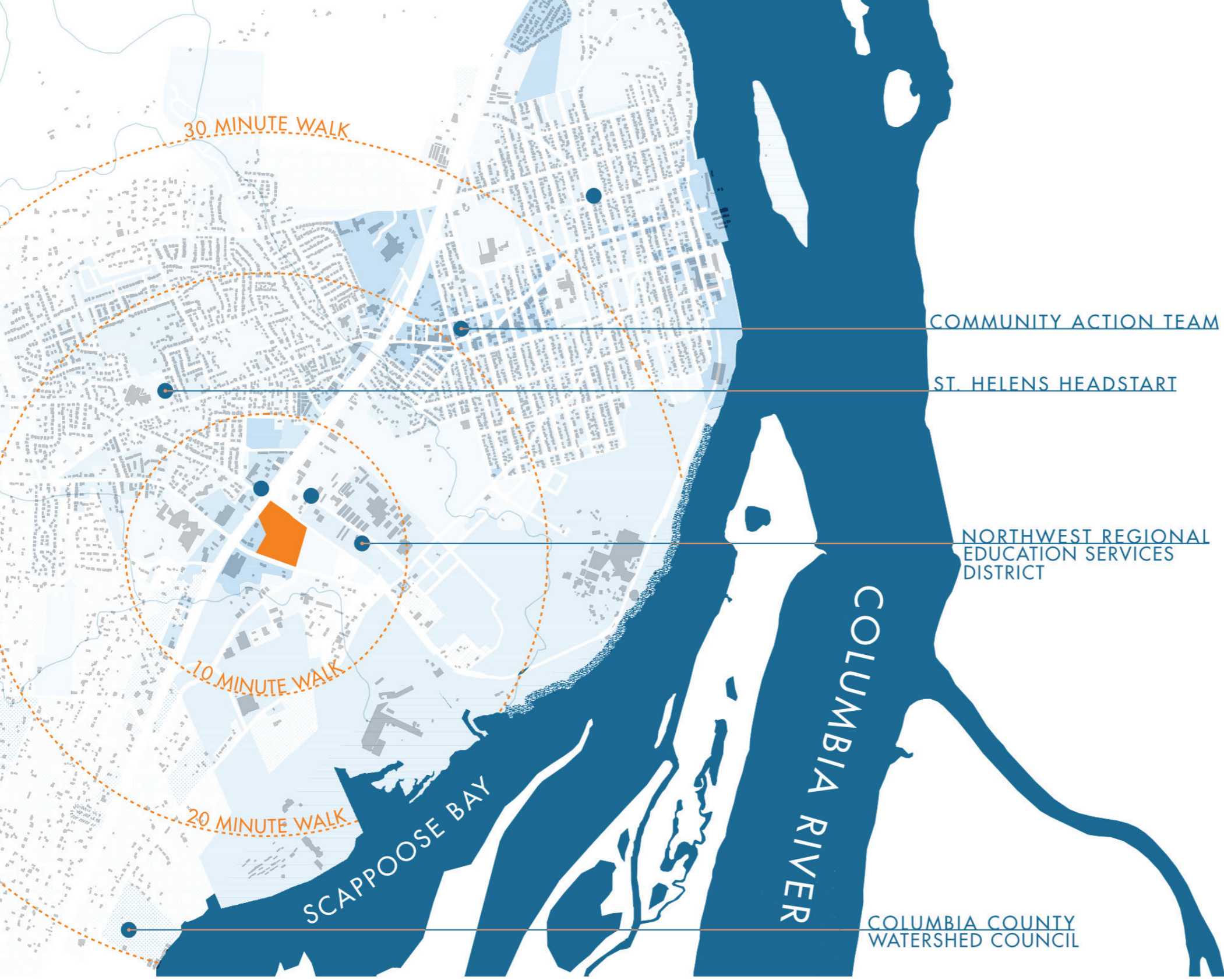
## Medicine Wheel Recovery Services

Medicine Wheel Recovery Services (MWR) is a local organization that offers programs in mental health, addiction, and substance abuse services, and these include DUII services, gambling services, and veterans housing assistance. In addition, MWR also offers a variety of culturally-specific activities that are geared towards bringing tribal youth and elders together and celebrate their indigenous heritage.

Located along Highway 30 in Multnomah County, the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA) is a non-profit organization that specializes in culturally-specific substance abuse services for Native Americans first, but also anyone who needs help. NARA has a residential family treatment center that houses child and family services, primary health care center, adult mental health center, and a wellness center. NARA also provides community and culture programs that house youth-specific programs, veterans programs and elders programs. NARA does offer financial assistance in order to access their services by offering a sliding scale for fees, which is based on income and family size.

## Columbia Health Service

Columbia Health Service (CHS) is a non-profit focused on public health that does not limit services based on health insurance status. The clinic provides assistance with the Oregon Health Plan, federal WIC (Woman, Infant, Child) program, family planning, immunization, and other clinical services for mental and physical health. They also provide in-home nurse visits to assist families from the comfort of their own space.



### Mapping Equity and Environment Assets

Because the demographic identity of St. Helens residents is primarily white and English-speaking, extra care must be made with diversity and equity considerations at the St. Helens affordable housing community to ensure that all residents feel welcome.

The CPID team reached out to community organizations and representatives for design and program recommendations to promote cultural inclusivity and equity onsite. The CPID is also recommending that offer of compensation be extended to community partners brought on to advise, lead, or facilitate programs or design elements that CDP, engAGE, or CPID cannot provide. Compensation is defined in the Metro invests resources to reduce barriers: Guide to using stipends, compensation and participation support document as “payment to a community member who provides the culturally-specific expertise, leadership, and services.” This is an important standard that should be practiced when bringing in community partners outside their normal scope of work, especially those from historically marginalized or underrepresented communities, in order to promote fair participation and equity. The ‘Metro invests resources to reduce barriers: Guide to using stipends, compensation and participation support’ document is included as an appendix to this document for your reference.



# Equity and Environment Connections

## Migrant Education Service District

Migrant Education is a federally-funded program through the Northwest Regional Education Service District that offers supplemental educational support to children who are migrant workers. However, anyone under 21 that does not have a high school diploma, also qualifies for this program. This program is not just specifically for the Latinx community, but anyone who works or has parents who work in any of the eligible industries (agriculture, fishing, timber). Migrant Education's services include school readiness support, math and reading support, and graduation support, free breakfast and lunch program, 24-hour emergency insurance for the children, emergency funds for bills and unexpected expenses, educational field trips, and summer school and summer camps. Migrant Education has a direct presence in Columbia County via the local school district and is interested in bringing their services and programming to the community buildings on-site for residents.

### Space Needs

Migrant Education would be interested to use classroom or gathering spaces for their programming if access to WIFI, technical and presentation equipment, and a kitchen were available. They also expressed a desire for access to office space to enable onsite social worker visits.

### Equity Recommendations

Our contact, Rosa Gilbert, made a number of other design and program recommendations to make the St. Helens affordable housing community more equitable for migrant and

Latinx families, including the following;

- Free WIFI for residents or WIFI hotspots throughout the site
- Learning center where quiet homework and work can take place
- After school activities or daycare services
- Low barrier policies, like not requiring IDs or deposits
- Regular, culturally-specific events for the community (i.e. dia de los muertos events, black pride events, etc.)
- A large community gathering space with a community kitchen that can be reserved for family or community gatherings (i.e. quinceanera celebrations)
- Bilingual staff member(s) available
- Parking that accommodates the big trucks and vans (i.e. landscaping trucks) and a dedicated car service space
- In-unit laundry services



**"The connection to nature is a huge need. Everyone deserves art and beauty and it should not cost money to experience it."**

**Nina Reed, Northwest Oregon Housing Authority**

Columbia County, but currently offers programming and resources in Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas Counties. David Martinez, the Deputy Director at Latino Network offered recommendations to improve access for the Latinx community at the St. Helens affordable housing project, including;

- Availability of larger units for multi-generational families with adaptation for older adults in family units (grab bars, maneuverability, etc.)
- Community spaces onsite to allow for workshops, gatherings with access to community kitchens
- Free WIFI in all shared spaces
- Provide onsite options for teens including hang out space and quiet homework space away from family
- Think about what barriers exist in the application process beyond just language (ID requirements, deposits).
- Conduct outreach via community liaisons to the Latinx community during the lease-up process, misconceptions about national policies (ie. accessing tax-payer funding programs impacting immigration status) can deter the Latinx community from actively applying for housing.
- Reach out to Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus in Washington County as a potential resource for Latinx community in St. Helens.

## Latino Network

The Latino Network is a Latinx-led education organization specializing in culturally specific services for youth and their families.

### Equity Recommendations

The Latino Network does not operate in

## St. Helens Senior Center

The St. Helens Senior Center made a number of design recommendations to make the housing development more welcoming for seniors and people with disabilities, including;

- Wider doorways and special consideration of wheelchair and walker users, meeting or exceeding ADA standards, in the senior living building and public spaces
- Provision of sound amplification systems in community spaces to accommodate the hearing impaired
- A bus stop onsite, with a safe place to wait for rides to medical appointments

## Ms. Wren Christopher

Ms. Christopher expressed concern about the lack of 'bridge' to the Indigenous community in the development of the St. Helens affordable housing complex. CPID recommends engaging with the local Native American community through liaisons like Ms. Wren Christopher for consultation about acknowledging the ancestral history of the project site and the current needs of the Indigenous community in St. Helens.

### Equity Recommendations

Ms. Christopher made a number of recommendations to promote equity, inclusion, and environmental healing onsite, including;

- Planting and labeling native plants with significance to the local Indigenous community
- Special considerations for accessibility

for elders like providing non-lift access to the sunken courtyard at the senior living building and adequate width on trails for wheelchairs

- A focus on stormwater management and restoration through plantings, bioswales, and limiting asphalt onsite
- Inclusion of a prayer space onsite
- Outdoor firepits and cooking areas that allow for traditional Indigenous cooking methods (i.e. salmon smoking)

## Columbia Community Mental Health (CCMH)

Todd Jacobsen at CCMH indicated that they could have a presence onsite five days a week depending on eligibility and need of future residents. CCMH takes the Oregon Health Plan and has sliding scale pay options to serve St. Helens residents at all income levels. Translation and interpretation services are also available for their programs. The variety of outpatient, intensive support services, peer support, and comprehensive mental health services makes CCMH a great candidate for equitable mental health programs onsite. Todd also mentioned a desire to potentially house their clients at the housing complex, with additional support for these residents provided by CCMH. CPID recommends connecting with CCMH early on in the leasing process to build an equitable housing strategy for neurodivergent populations.

# Findings and Recommendations

The CPID categorized design and program recommendations into three categories. One, building and essential infrastructure, includes items critical for early integration by the design team. Two, resident community-based interventions, refers to items that can be done by the housing community itself through on-site programming or annual events. Three, future implementation with community partner involvement, refers to CPID recommendations that can be implemented during or after construction with guidance from community partners or city infrastructure investment. **While the CPID has begun the relationship-building process with each organization and community partner listed in the following recommendations, their participation thus far has been entirely voluntary, and we cannot guarantee they will continue to be involved as this project develops.**





**Recommendations  
for Building and Essential  
Infrastructure**

- A. Nature Play
- B. Native Landscaping
- C. Bus Stop
- D. Community Gardens
- E. Commons Building

**Recommendations for  
Resident Community-Based  
Interventions**

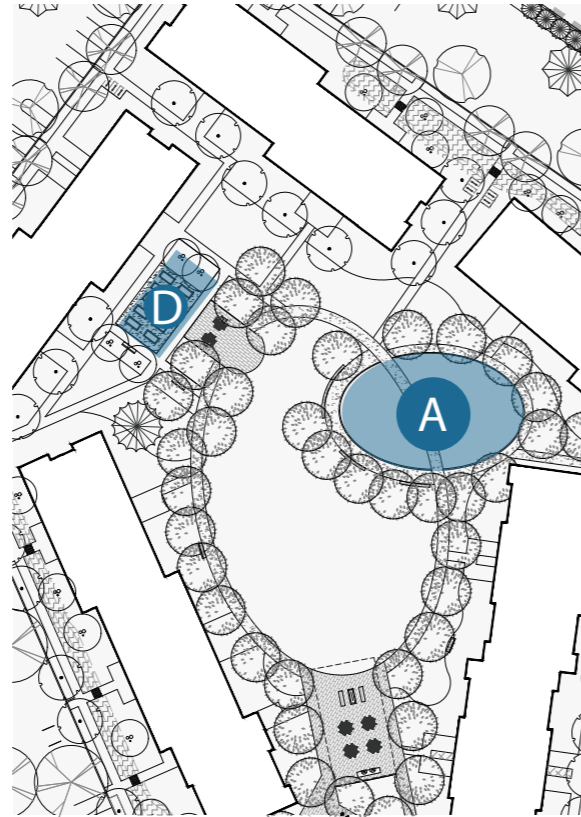
- G. Areas of Respite
- H. Parking Lot
- I. Free Fridge and Community Pantry

**Recommendations  
for Future Implementation with  
Community Partnerships**

- J. Indigenous Acknowledgement
- K. Sidewalks and Greenways

# Recommendations for Building and Essential Infrastructure

CPID recommendations critical for early integration. Recommendations were presented based on research and feedback from community leaders and organizations.



Label A represents the nature play area designated within the courtyard created by the family apartment buildings. The adjacent central green area will focus on sports programming.



Champoeg State Park Nature Play - St. Paul, OR

## A. Nature Play

The CPID recommends a focus on nature play design for the structured play area onsite. The proximity to the wetland has made connection to nature a fitting theme to carry throughout the site. In our interview with Ms. Wren Christopher, she also reiterated the importance of nature play, things like earth mounds and references to the four cardinal directions, can help children connect to the earth around them.

### Precedents

Khunamokwst (meaning 'together' in Chinuk Wawa Language) Park in the Cully neighborhood in Portland, OR and its nature play area were designed and planned with extensive community involvement. Designers worked with the city to develop a project advisory committee to ensure that the park reflected the needs of the diverse Cully neighborhood. Bilingual outreach materials were provided to increase diverse stakeholder involvement. Community partnerships with nonprofits deeply connected in the area helped designers engage local children in the design and building process. All these steps were taken toward the goal of creating an inclusive park, welcome to all.

The nature play area situated within Champoeg State Park on the Willamette River incorporates a variety of climbing elements and sand and water play areas. Educational elements about the natural environment and the cultural history of the area are woven in throughout the park.



Khunamokwst Park - Portland, OR



Champoeg State Park Nature Play - St. Paul, OR

## B. Native Landscape



Camas



Cattails



Oregon White Oak

The eastern edge of the site is a designated and protected wetland area. This presents the possibility for unique educational opportunities for the residents about the environment, native plants, wildlife, and indigenous history. Landscaping the site with native plantings can weave the feel of the wetland landscape into the site and connect residents with their natural surroundings. The wetland trail running along the buffer zone between the development area and the wetlands is the ideal location for native plantings to be integrated with areas of respite to allow for residents of all ages to experience a closeness with nature while living in a dense housing community.

### Environmental Benefits

The incorporation of native landscaping into the site has numerous environmental benefits. Native plants require less water and maintenance than traditional landscaping and help support native pollinator species. Landscaping with native plants helps the ecosystem remain healthy, increases the biodiversity of birds, butterflies, and animals, and the aesthetic of natural, native plants increases the sense of place (Butler et. al, 2012).

### Health Benefits

There are numerous health benefits when it comes to nature and the connection to nature, specifically for older or aging populations. Connection to nature has both mental and physical benefits that include, emotional and social well-being, reduction of pain, reduction of need for medication, encouragement for active lifestyles & exercise, stress-reduction, improved attention-span, facilitation of social or community interactions, and the development of a sense of purpose (Freeman et. al, 2019).

There is a growing interest in the public health benefits of green spaces that expand beyond just the older generations. Studies show that access to nature or green spaces improves overall physical health—reduced blood pressure and allergies, lower mortality rates from cardio-vascular disease, improved self-perceived general health, improved mental well-being, and greater social well-being in people of all ages (Shanahan et. al, 2016).

CPID recommends connecting with the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council and PSU professor Judy BlueHorse Skelton as resources for the development of a native plantings list for the site with the following steps in mind:

1. Connect with Judy Bluhorse Skelton and Scappoose Bay Watershed Council during the Construction Documents phase of the project.
2. Collaboratively develop native plant list with significance to Indigenous communities and wetland environments.
3. Use the planting list to inform the final landscape planting plan for the project.

### Potential Partnerships

Scappoose Bay Watershed Council  
Judy BlueHorse Skelton, PSU



Wetland delineated area (in green) is buffered by a nature trail along the edge of the development zone (in blue)

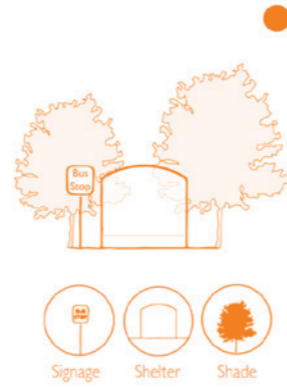
## C. Bus Stop

According to the 2018 American Community Survey Census data, 11.3 percent of households in St. Helens do not own a car. This statistic underscores the importance of reliable and accessible public transportation for the St. Helens Affordable Housing complex community. When asked what services were most important to seniors in the area, the St. Helens Senior Center indicated that reliable transportation to and from medical appointments was severely lacking. Seniors often need transportation assistance to local doctors appointments and especially appointments further away in Portland. A bus stop at the housing complex could serve the needs of the St. Helens public transportation system by providing a safe, covered place to rest for seniors as they wait for medical transport.

### Placemaking

The basic provisions for the bus stop are an accessible bench for seniors with additional space undercover for wheelchairs, scooters, and a stroller to make this covered waiting space accessible for all ages. Additionally, the CPID has extensively researched ways to activate bus stops to better serve additional program needs onsite by incorporating elements such as art, educational infrastructure, nature, etc. The CPID Transit Guide: Rethinking Bus Stops for Community Impact lays out the process and possibilities for placemaking at bus stops, this document can be found in the appendix and excerpts are provided to the right.

The key to transforming a bus stop to act beyond its basic function is to engage the community to develop their own ideas for the space. The community within the housing complex and in the greater St. Helens community could collaborate in design and building efforts. Placemaking projects like the construction of a bus stop can transform an otherwise utilitarian feature into one that the community feels is their own. CPID recommends reaching out early to Joe Mauck, the woodworking and design/build instructor at St. Helens High School, to request he include a bus stop in the list of possible projects available to his students.



#### Basic Bus Stop

The key elements of a successful bus stop are signage, shelter, and shade



#### Farmers Market Stop

Provide weekly fresh food markets at bus stops to provide convenient access to healthy food for commuters



#### Mosaic Stop

Pair local schools with bus stops and provide tiles for children to decorate as their own. Local organizations and artists can work together to install cohesive mosaics on bus stop shelters



King County bus shelter murals in Seattle, WA

### Precedent

The King Count Metro system in Seattle, WA started a program in 1989 to involve children and other members of the community in the design and painting of bus shelter murals. Materials were provided by the transportation system, but the vision and design were led by community members themselves.

We recommend the following steps in order to successfully integrate these recommendations:

1. Connect with Joe Mauck and CPID during construction to develop an engagement plan for St. Helens High School students and future residents.
2. Engage with residents after move-in to determine potential program ideas for the bus stop that is relevant to the housing community.
3. Collaborate with CPID and Joe Mauck with St. Helens High School students for the design and construction of the bus stop using resident input.

### Potential Partnerships

CPID  
St. Helens High School Woodshop

## D. Community Garden

Community gardens at the St. Helens affordable housing complex can provide opportunities for community building, education, and allow for people to grow their own food. St. Helens has many resources to support home gardeners through the OSU Extension Service, with their Seed to Supper classes and Master Gardener program. OSU Extension Service has expressed interest in bringing some of this programming to the site to support the education and food security of this future housing community. Seed to Supper classes can teach people how to grow their garden and ultimately how to cook the items they have produced. There are nearly 40 Master Gardeners in St. Helens, that are a valuable wealth of knowledge for the community. Master Gardeners are required to volunteer in the community, there is potential to create gardener 'office hours' or assistance in getting started with a new plot.

### Space Requirements

Everyone we spoke with involved in gardening programs in St. Helens emphasized that fences around the garden beds are critical to deter deer, otherwise little to no produce will survive for human consumption. Other recommendations included providing tools and soil to residents to eliminate any financial barriers to involvement in the community garden program onsite.

We recommend the following steps in order to successfully integrate a community garden program into the site:

1. Connect with Scott Bauska and Joan Youngberg with the Master Gardener program, Jenny Rudolph at OSU Extension during the construction and lease-up phase to build relationships and plan potential programming opportunities onsite.
2. Work collaboratively to develop site-specific programming, i.e. master gardener support for resident gardeners, Seed to Supper program.
3. Integrate programming after resident move-in.

### Potential Partnerships

OSU Extension Service  
Scott Bauska, Master Gardener  
Joan Youngberg, Master Gardener



Entry gate at the St. Helens Senior Center garden



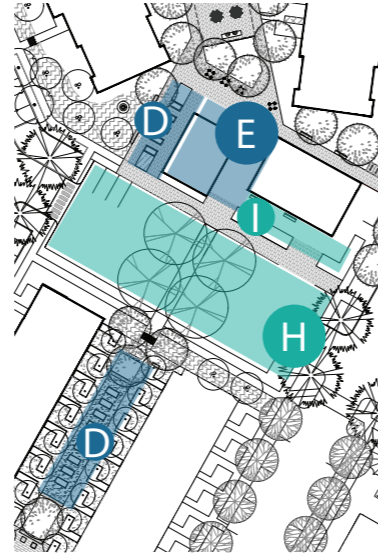
Fencing at the St. Helens Senior Center community garden

## E. Commons Building

Throughout the engagement process, the CPID has identified spatial needs in the commons building, in order to create a more cohesive space that is truly inclusive of all ages and needs. To start, a large, multi-use gathering space is much needed. In order for this space to be functional and multi-purpose, there needs to be access to a sink and easily moveable furniture in order to flex the space. In addition, we recommend that this space does not have carpet, but rather a linoleum or hardwood floor instead, because these are easily cleanable, and carpet prohibits any types of movement in the space, such as dancing, exercise, etc. The main gathering space has been identified as a place of community interaction for all ages, and is therefore a crucial space for intergenerational community-building.

### Classroom & Meeting Space

Having designated classroom or meeting spaces that are private from the main gathering area, is an important feature the CPID has identified. Various community organizations who have expressed interest in partnering with the housing development in order to bring services directly to the residents, would utilize these spaces to host classes, workshops, and informational meetings. In order for integration into the space to be successful, these spaces would need to have a desk where organizations could set up computers and other equipment/materials, tables and chairs, WiFi they can connect to, as well as a projector and screen with various cables to plug-in to for presentations. Not only would these spaces be utilized by community partners, but also double as a study or work space. It is important that youth and adults have a quiet place to escape to where they can work and or study/homework. WiFi in this building is therefore crucial, many low-income residents have to negate internet service as it is an expense they cannot afford. This digital divide has become more apparent and greater with the onset of COVID-19, and therefore providing free WiFi in the community building allows for residents to have a place to work and study.



### The Heart of the Community

The Commons Building is located at the center of the site where the three different housing communities come together. Because of this, CPID has recommended a number of other interventions be located in this area and that connections between outdoor program areas, like the wetland trail and bus stop, and the Commons Building be emphasized.



Community Led Food Distribution



Lockable Storage Cabinets



Cultural Celebration at Gateway  
Discovery Park – Portland, Oregon

### Other Space Recommendations

The space will need some amount of storage, more specifically lockable storage space. Numerous organizations have expressed this need, in order to store their materials needed to bring programming to the space. There is also a need for some type of sound amplification, whether that be a speaker system throughout, or acoustic design features.

Through conversations with community representatives, like Migrant Education and the Latino Network, we have identified that this space will be more than just a gathering space for programmed events, but a place where residents will want to host birthday parties, quinceaneras, baptism celebrations, and other various events important to each household & community. Items critical to the hosting of these events include a kitchen area adjacent to the gathering space, hard floor surfaces for dancing, and connection to the outdoors. Allowing the community centers to be 'booked' or 'reserved' for such events will be an important option for residents—providing them a place to celebrate key milestones and cultural events.

The ability for events to spill outdoors will also be crucial for flexibility for larger events hosted in the commons building. Extending activities outdoors could also serve as an invitation to the community at large to participate in the community events taking place in the commons building. A connection to the adjacent parking lot to the south could be an asset on market days and a connection to the patio and lawn area to the north could allow for outdoor cooking and larger events.

### Potential Partners

St. Helens Park & Rec  
St. Helens Public Library  
Migrant Education Service District  
OSU Extension Service

# Recommendations for Resident Community-Based Interventions

CPID recommendations for community-based interventions, through community engagement activities and programming with future residents of the St. Helens affordable housing complex. Recommendations were presented based on research and feedback from community leaders and organizations. We recommend the following steps be taken in order to develop and integrate community-based programs successfully once residents have moved in:

1. Site operations staff should connect with community organizations during the construction phase to start the relationship-building process and strengthen potential partnership opportunities.
2. Once residents have moved in, host a number of community-building activities such as open houses and block parties to facilitate relationship-building and community.
3. Employ a public engagement strategy with residents such as resident surveys, interviews, and the development of a resident advisory committee to help guide the activities and programming that will be offered to residents. It is recommended that if a community advisory board is assembled, that participants are compensated for their time via stipends or gift cards to remove potential barriers to participation and to encourage an equitable representation of residents.
4. Invite potential community partners for onsite programming to participate in the engagement process where relevant (i.e. invite the St. Helens Public Library to meet with residents or resident advisory committee to collaborate on library programming to be offered onsite).
5. Use feedback from residents and collaborate to develop the programming priorities for the site.
6. Collaborate with and bring-in the various community organizations and partners to provide or support the desired programming.
7. Similarly outreach techniques to residents can be employed for determining design priorities of onsite interventions, like the areas of respite and art installations.

## G. Areas of Respite

The wetland trail through the site will provide excellent exercise opportunities for all ages and abilities if it is a wide, even-surfaced paths, accessible for strollers and wheelchairs, and if areas of rest are provided at frequent intervals. Connecting these areas of respite to the adjacent wetlands can help encourage residents of all ages to connect with the natural environment. The addition of simple educational items like stationary binoculars, informational plaques, and bird boxes can encourage interaction with the neighboring wetland.



Stationary binoculars for wildlife viewing

### Placemaking

Interventions at the areas of respite could provide opportunities for community building and education centered around environmental stewardship. St. Helens has a strong woodworking community that could be tapped into for installations near the wetlands. The library has a strong youth science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education program that could be a foundation for building bird habitats with assistance from the youth programming at OSU Extension Services and Scappoose Bay Watershed Council.



Bird boxes provide critical nesting habitat for native bird species

Engaging the residents in decisions around what types of interventions and amenities are provided at the areas of respite will instill a sense of ownership and connection to the trail system and surrounding natural area. CPID recommends the following steps to determine desired interventions and activities provided at the areas of respite:

1. During construction connect with St. Helens Public Library, Scappoose Bay Watershed Council, and OSU Extension Service to build relationships with these organizations.
2. After move in use community-building events and engagement strategies to involve residents in decisions around what types of interventions are desired along the wetland trail and at areas of respite.
3. Collaborate with relevant community assets or organizations to aid in bringing resident desires to life.



Bird Blind at Thousand Acres Park in Troutdale, Oregon

### Potential Partnerships

St. Helens High School Woodshop  
St. Helens Public Library  
OSU Extension Services  
Scappoose Bay Watershed Council

## H. Parking Lot Placemaking

The CPID is recommending a community engagement project revolving around the painting and decorating of the parking spaces within the site. This would provide a unique opportunity for residents of all ages to come together and reclaim the parking lot as theirs, creating an atmosphere of community and creativity. The parking lot area adjacent to the commons building is slated to host a marketplace on Saturdays, painting this area could help to designate this area as different or special. A colorful painted space could transform the atmosphere of the market and other events held in this parking area.

We are recommending a collaboration between the housing complex and City Repair Project and local artist Joan Youngberg in the implementation of this project. City Repair Project is an organization who specializes in placemaking and reclamation of streets in order to foster a sense of place and community. Local artist Joan Youngberg has extensive experience executing community art projects in St. Helens and could be a great resource for this endeavor.

### Precedents

The City Repair Project helps communities reclaim their streets to help foster safety and community in their neighborhoods with their intersection painting projects in Portland.

High school seniors paint their parking spaces at Notre Dame Preparatory High School in Scottsdale, Arizona to fundraise for prom. The idea here has taken off to the point that each year the school clears the parking lot for new seniors to paint the spots as an annual event.

The CPID recommends the following steps for implementing the parking lot and crosswalk painting project:

1. During construction, connect with Joan Youngberg and the City Repair Project to build relationships ahead of future project(s).
2. Hire the City Repair project to advise on parking lot painting undertaking based on their experience with street painting facilitation. Engage with Joan Youngberg and other local artists for support.
3. Organize a community block party or event around the parking lot and crosswalk painting project.
4. Reach out to residents using a variety of methods to encourage the diverse participation of residents (i.e. digitally, notice boards, door hangers, through community representatives).
5. Host event!

### Potential Partnerships

Joan Youngberg, local artist  
Kirk Rea, The City Repair Project



City Repair Project community street painting projects



Notre Dame Preparatory High School parking lot



# I. Free Fridge and Community Pantry

In response to the instability of the world during Covid-19, a 'free fridge' movement has gained traction in different US cities. In Portland, PDX Free Fridge is a network of community fridges and pantries that are open for anyone to grab food who needs it. It is modeled after the little lending library concept of 'take what you need, leave what you don't, give what you can.' A similar community-run program in Eugene and Springfield, 'Little Free Pantries,' has seen an uptick in use of the pantries during the pandemic. The city of Eugene has since partnered with the Burrito Brigade and FOOD for Lane County, the program founders, to expand and beautify the project in light of the pandemic.

The community pantry concept, a central space to collect food and supplies for others in need, could foster community care in the new neighborhood being created at the St Helens Affordable Housing complex. Barriers such as lack of transportation, shame, and fear can prevent people from accessing formal food pantries. A free pantry close to home, built around community, could make food assistance more accessible to those who need it.

Prior to the pandemic, a local high school woodshop in Eugene helped craft the free little pantries. Similar partnerships could be made with the local woodworking community in St. Helens, especially the project-based wood shop program at St. Helens High School. The community gardens onsite could facilitate the sharing of surplus produce with folks beyond those who have a garden plot. Leftovers from the weekly Fresh Alliance produce deliveries from the Columbia Pacific Food Bank could be stored at the community fridge or pantry for neighbors unable to participate in the event, or find themselves needing supplemental food.



'Free Fridge' - Portland, OR



'Free Fridge' - Eugene, OR

The CPID recommends the following steps to determine the implementation of a community fridge or pantry:

1. Prior to construction, connect with the Columbia Pacific Food Bank about the potential for bringing Fresh Alliance food boxes onsite weekly.
2. Engage with residents and/or a resident advisory committee for feedback about community pantry to determine location, level of desire and need, and to determine the stewards of the pantry upkeep.
3. Connect with St. Helens High School Woodworking or CPID to determine whether students are interested in collaborating with staff and residents for design and implementation of pantry.
4. Connect with onsite resident gardeners to encourage sharing of surplus produce grown onsite.

## Potential Partnerships

St. Helens High School Woodworking Class  
Columbia Pacific Food Bank



'Little Free Pantry' - Eugene, OR



'Little Free Pantry' - Eugene, OR

# Recommendations for Future Implementation with Community Partnerships

CPID recommendations that can be developed and implemented during or after the construction process with input and support from key community partnerships. Recommendations are based on research and feedback from community leaders and organizations.

## J. Indigenous Acknowledgement

In addition to recommending the incorporation of native plants along the path adjacent to the wetlands next to the site, the CPID recommends labeling native plants along walks and trails within the affordable housing community with their names, roles in environment and significance to the Indigenous communities of the region. Labeling native plants with their traditional names and in an indigenous context would create a rich educational opportunity for all ages. This is identified as an opportunity to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the site in collaboration with the local native communities.

Based on research and community outreach, the CPID is recommending a collaboration with Ms. Wren Christopher, Judy BlueHorse Skelton, and potentially the Chinook Nations to help curate informational signage along the wetlands adjacent to the site. Collaboration and compensation of the local Native American community is critical for accurate and respectful representation of culture and customs. This provides an opportunity for residents to engage in local histories and knowledge while also providing an opportunity for local, Indigenous communities to voice their stories.

This program could also be expanded throughout St. Helens in parks and other public areas to weave the St. Helens affordable housing complex into the overall community and honors the legacy of the original stewards of the land where this community resides.

### Precedents

Examples of this being done elsewhere include the design & development of visitor centers in the National Desert Wildlife Refuge in Nevada. This project was created in collaboration between federal agencies and

Nuwuvi tribal members, to develop the content and curation of exhibits in each visitor's center, in order to center it on Native voices and stories.

Ms. Wren Christopher has experience working on similar projects in the region, including the development of plant markers in English and Chinuk along walking paths on Sauvie Island and on a trail near Scappoose Bay in Warren. Judy BlueHorse Skelton has worked on many projects in the Portland area restoring native plants to create healing spaces, including at the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians Portland office.

We recommend the following steps be taken in order to develop and integrate Indigenous plant acknowledgement onsite:

1. During construction reconnect with PSU professor Judy BlueHorse Skelton and reach out to Ms. Wren Christopher as advisors for this effort and for recommendations on who else to involve in the process.
2. Using native plant list and site plan, identify design and content of Indigenous plant identification and history to be included onsite.
3. Follow the lead of Indigenous advisors on how best to implement effort onsite and how to engage residents and wider community in this effort.
4. Compensate Indigenous advisors and collaborators for their time and effort.

### Potential Partners

Judy Bluehorse Skelton, PSU  
Ms. Wren Christopher, Traditional Arts Educator  
Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Chinook Nation



Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Formally Recognizes its Place on Nuwuvi Ancestral Lands



National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center Exhibits Created in Collaboration Between Federal Agencies and Nuwuvi Tribal Members

## K. Sidewalks and Greenways

With 11 percent of households not owning cars in St. Helens, safer routes to community amenities and resources via alternative transportation, like walking, biking, and public transportation, will increase connectedness of the affordable housing development to the wider St. Helens community.

McCormick park is about a mile away from the site, but a safe, accessible sidewalk route to this rich resource is not consistently available. Bike lanes along this route are also incomplete and unprotected on a high volume Gable/Old Portland Road.

Creating visual and/or physical separation between motor vehicles and pedestrians allows for safer travel for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### Highway 30 and Rail Crossing

According to the Columbia County Rail Safety and Mobility Study Existing Conditions Memorandum (2020), the intersection of Gable Road and Highway 30 is the second busiest intersection in Columbia County with peak vehicle delays at 27 minutes and up to 520 vehicles per hour passing through. The backup at this intersection when a train is on the tracks and during peak hours could cause issues for vehicle access to the affordable housing site. And the addition of over 100 residential units to the area will only serve to increase volume of traffic at this intersection. The study puts this intersection at 'tier 1' priority for redevelopment based on 'safety, traffic delay, and public input' factors. With these redevelopments, the CPID recommends pedestrian and bike safety infrastructure be prioritized to provide the large number of residents of the affordable housing complex a better path to groceries, school, and other services across Highway 30.

CPID recommends the following steps be taken in order to advocate for pedestrian and alternative transportation opportunities for residents:

1. Connect with the Port of Columbia County and the City of St. Helens about the results and ongoing efforts with the Columbia County Rail Safety and Mobility Study.
2. Advocate for pedestrian and bike safety improvements at the intersection of Gable Road and Highway 30 on behalf of future residents through formal channels available.
3. Identify any potential partnerships between CDP and city or county to implement safe pedestrian and bike infrastructure to important community assets and amenities.

### Potential Partners

City of St. Helens  
Port of Columbia County



Pedestrian rail crossing at the intersection of Highway 30 and Gable Road



Unprotected bike path at the intersection of Highway 30 and Gable Road



A majority of Gable Road and Old Portland Road do not have sidewalk infrastructure



Protected bike lane and highlighted pedestrian crossing at intersection in Portland, Oregon

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