



**CITY OF PORTLAND**  
**Executive Department**  
**Jon P. Jennings, City Manager**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: Housing and Economic Development Committee**

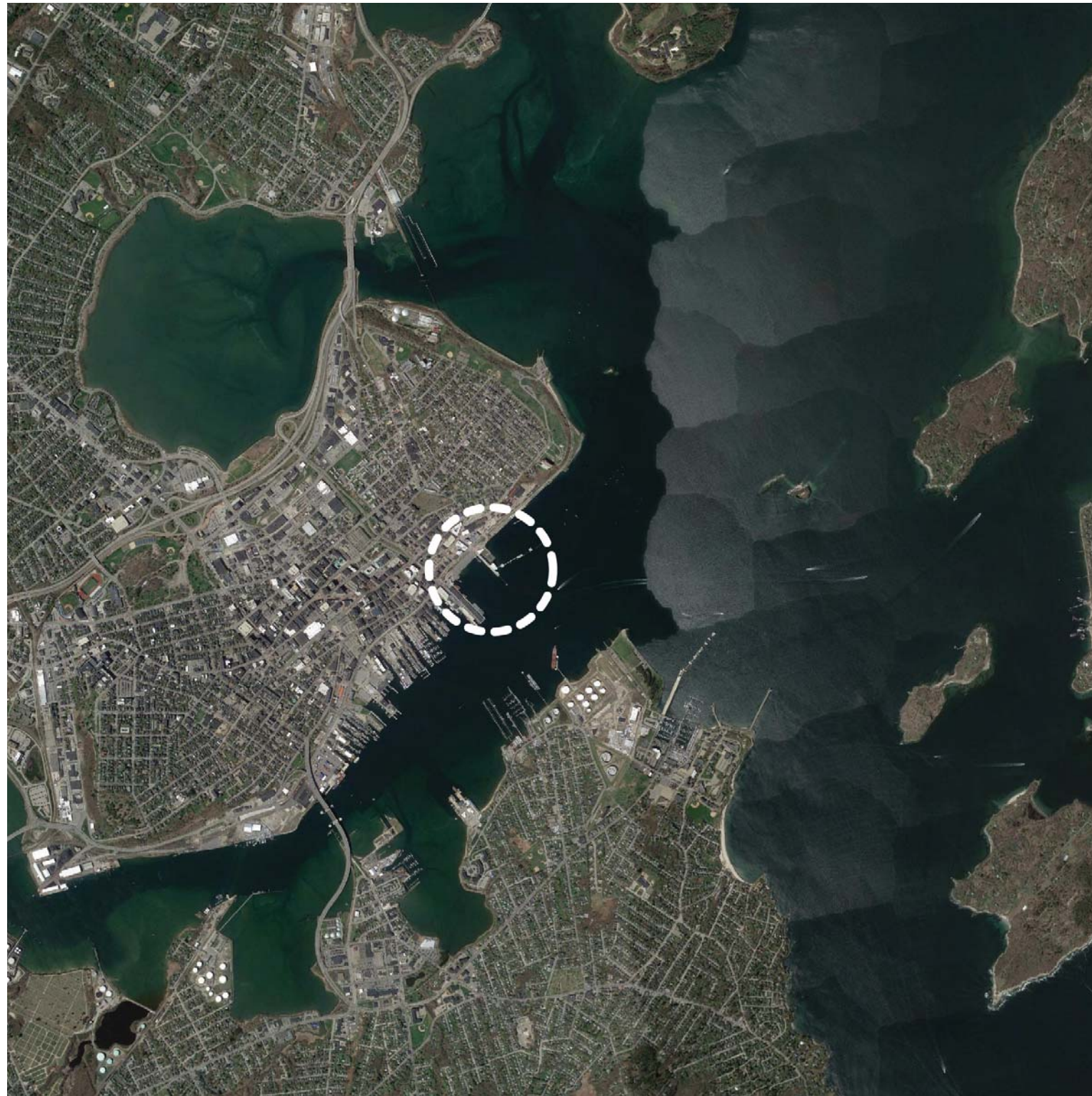
**From: Jon P. Jennings, City Manager**

**Date: March 12, 2021**

**Subject: Portland Harbor Common Plan**

The *Platform for a new Portland Harbor Common* (Plan) was prepared by Dick Barringer, Michael Boucher, Patrick Costin, Amy Magida and Barry Sheff who volunteered their time and expertise to work with City staff over a few meetings to create a vision for Portland's waterfront. Dick approached me about their interest to undertake this project as volunteers. I would like to thank Dick and his entire team for sharing their time and expertise.

This Plan is being publicly presented to the Housing and Economic Development Committee for discussion and direction. It is recognized that public discussion regarding this Plan is needed to receive community input from residents and the waterfront community. Also, at this time, there are no funds allocated to support moving ahead with Plan implementation. After more public discussion and City Council direction, discussions related to funding the Plan's implementation will be needed, including the possibility of securing federal/state grants and private fund-raising.



# Platform for a new Portland Harbor Common

“A park is a great gathering space for *people*.”

Fredrick Law Olmsted, 1822-1903

Prepared for the City of Portland by Richard Barringer,  
Michael Boucher, Patrick Costin, Amy Magida and Barry Sheff,  
in collaboration with senior City officials.

April 2020



Portland Waterfront at Night from South Portland  
*Photo by Roman Jozefiak*

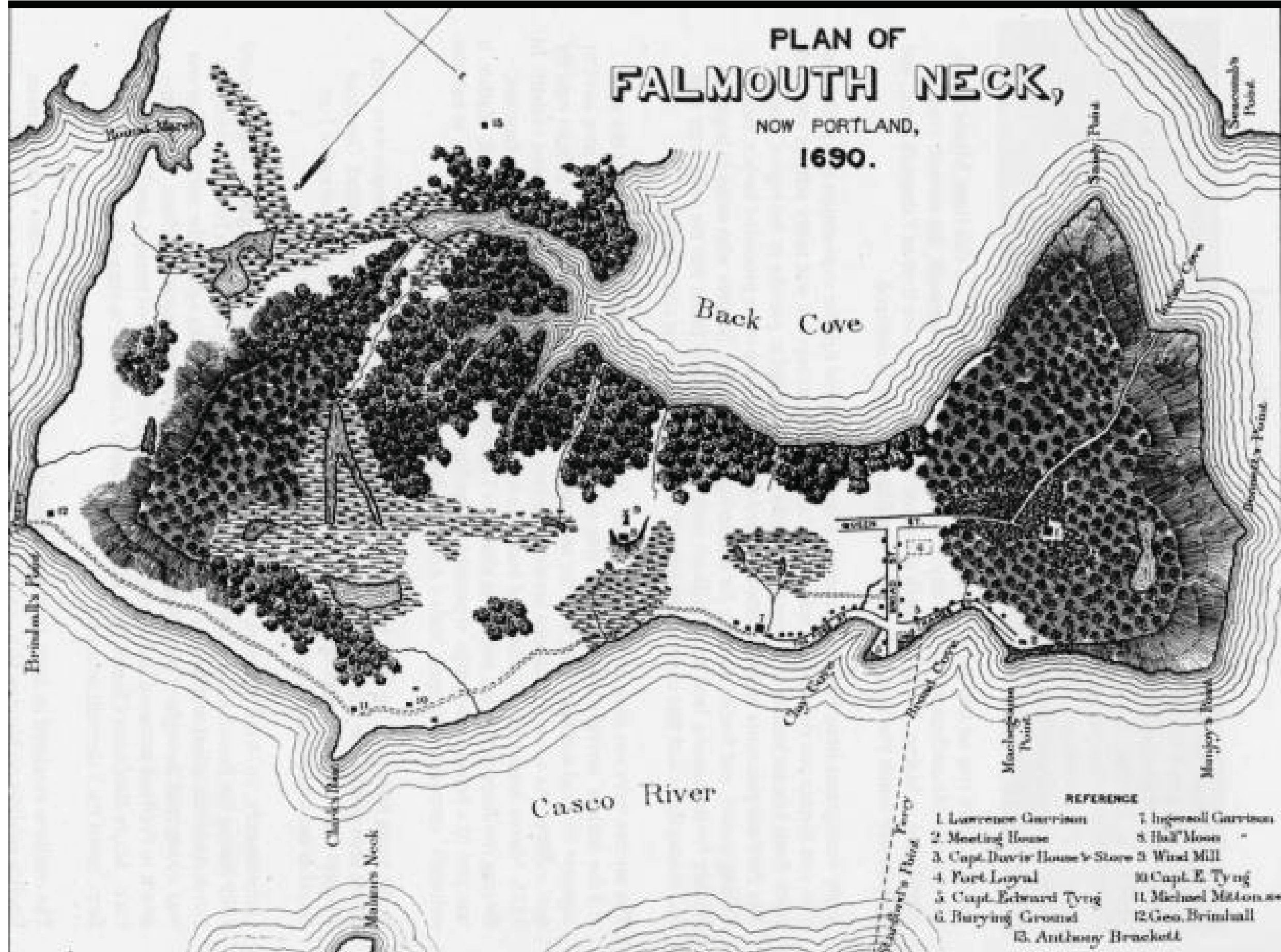
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A Look Back at  
Portland's Eastern Waterfront  
and the Maine State Pier

# PLAN OF FALMOUTH NECK,

NOW PORTLAND,  
1690.





Map of the City of Portland, 1837



Detail from 1876 Bird's Eye View of Portland showing Franklin, Galt, Atlantic and Grand Trunk Wharves



*Portland, Me. Grand Trunk R.R. Station.*

New Grand Trunk Station, Office Building and Grain Elevator, completed 1905



*Sketch of the Completed State Pier at Portland*

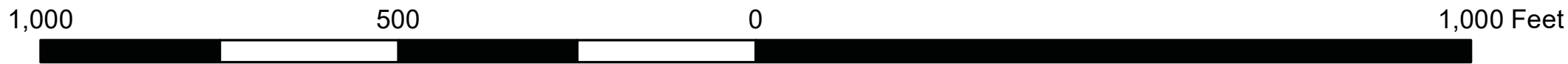
## Conceptual Drawing of Maine State Pier, c. 1921



2009 - Maine State Pier today



**Eastern Waterfront  
2018**



## TRANSFORMING PORTLAND'S PUBLIC WATERFRONT

Prepared by Richard Barringer of USM's Muskie School of Public Service; Patrick Costin of Canal 5 Studio; Michael Boucher and Amy Magida of Michael Boucher Landscape Architecture; and Barry Sheff of Woodard & Curran. Prepared for Portland City Manager Jon Jennings, with advice and assistance from senior staff Kathy Alves, Lena Geraghty, Christine Grimando, Greg Mitchell, and Bill Needleman, for whose insights and suggestions we are deeply grateful.

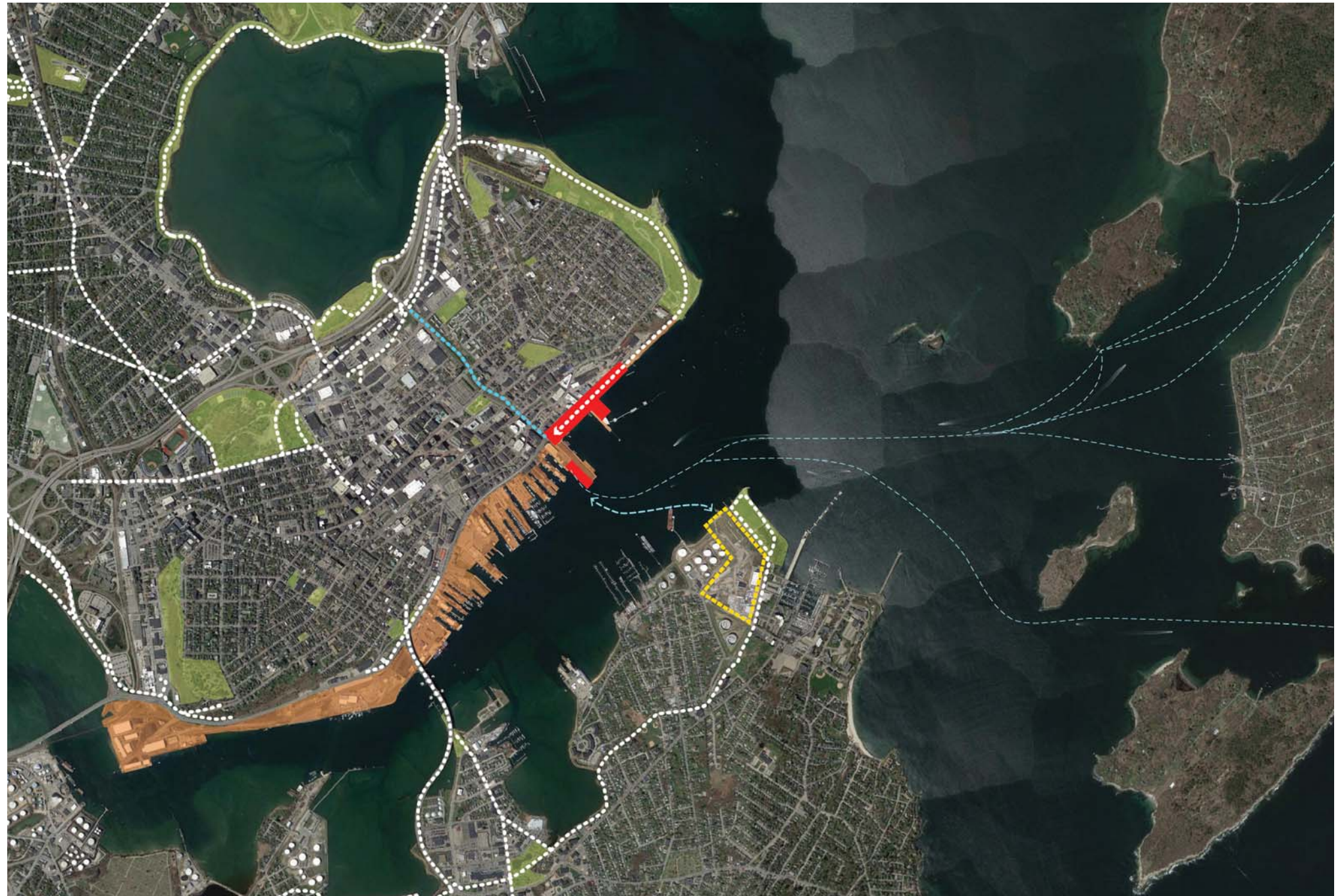
The goal of the project is to offer the City a framework for a signature piece of public land – one that will complement its working waterfront, leverage recent investments in public infrastructure, increase public access to the eastern waterfront, support a variety of public activities, and add to a vibrant city. The project team has been guided throughout by a set of objectives – simplicity in design, resilience in the face of climate change, flexibility in use, affordability and phase-ability in implementation.

This document should not be taken or interpreted as a completed “design.” Its intent is to provide a starting-place for consideration of this limited and consequential space along the Portland Harbor. Specific programming and design details remain to be developed through a process of investigation, analysis, and dialogue for each project area. Here, we intentionally avoid fine-grain planning or design character, seeking instead to offer a general concept for realizing the outstanding values and potential of this narrow stretch of publicly-owned land while advancing the goal and objectives cited above.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT SOCIAL SPACE?

- People
- Sitting spaces
- Street access
- Sun
- Food
- Water
- Trees
- People Watching

William H. Whyte  
*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, 1980



- Areas of Study (11.2 acres)
- Open Space Zones
- Waterfront Zones
- ○ ○ ○ Bike Lanes and Trails
- Franklin Street Pedestrian and Bike Improvements
- Casco Bay Ferry Lines
- ↔ Proposed Portland/ SoPo Ferry
- Future Development Sites

IMAGE 1 OPEN SPACE AND WATERFRONT ZONES

## PORTLAND WATERFRONT PLANNING: A BRIEF HISTORY

Created with the assistance of Bill Needleman, the City's Waterfront Coordinator, the summary and chronology below provide a partial snapshot of complex processes and pivotal events. It affords context for the proposed Portland Waterfront Common as the culmination of a quarter century of intense waterfront planning here. A contextual overview, it is not a complete picture or historic record of Portland's longstanding practice of waterfront planning.

While it concentrates on the central waterfront, Portland's working waterfront extends 2.5 miles from the Merrill Marine terminal in the west to the former Portland company (now, the "Portland Foreside" mixed-use development) on the east. The last remaining piece of public land extends just 2000 linear feet from the State Pier eastward to the Portland Foreside property. This publicly-owned parcel and its future are the subject of this framework proposal.

Purposeful planning for Portland's waterfront dates to the colonial era, with European settlement of Falmouth Neck in the 17th Century. Filling land, dredging the harbor, digging canals, building wharfs, constructing buildings, and establishing a landside transportation network necessary for marine commerce required forethought and intention. Portland's historic pattern of downtown streets extending onto deep-water wharfs strung along a wide, mixed-use corridor is a product of ongoing, shrewd, rigorous, and committed planning.

Modern waterfront planning in Portland generally dates to the 1990's and the writing of the *Waterfront Alliance Recommendations to the City Council* (GPCOG 1992) as the foundational document. Written coincident with the expiration of highly restrictive zoning applied through a 1987 citizen referendum, the Waterfront Alliance report segregated the waterfront into four functional sub-areas defined by the dominant marine industries and pier infrastructure of the time:

*Eastern Waterfront:* Deepwater industry (originally Bath Iron Works)

*Central Waterfront:* Fishing and mixed use (tourism and office)

*Western Waterfront:* Deepwater freight and marine industry

*Special Use Area:* Designed for the Portland Company Complex and adjacent uplands.

Within each sub-area, the *Waterfront Alliance* report promoted strong protections for water-dependent uses, while allowing other compatible marine and non-marine uses on a limited basis to generate revenues needed to maintain marine infrastructure. Zoning, tightly conforming to the sub-areas and policies promoted by the *Waterfront Alliance* report, was adopted by the City Council in January 1994.

While zoning specifics have undergone significant revision in each of the waterfront zones, the foundational framework of the *Waterfront Alliance* report remains intact. Specific language and recommendations from the report were reaffirmed with the adoption of *Portland's Plan 2030*, the City's current comprehensive plan.



Aerial view of Portland Harbor, 2017  
Photo by Carol M. Highsmith,

## PORTLAND WATERFRONT PLANNING: A BRIEF HISTORY

Milestones of the past quarter century in Portland waterfront planning and development include:

### Eastern Waterfront

- 1993** Publication of *The Port of Portland: Its Value to the Region*, by the City of Portland, Portland Chamber of Commerce, South Portland/Cape Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce, and USM's Muskie Institute.
- 1994** Establish *Waterfront Port Development Zone (WPDZ)* over Bath Iron Works (BIW) shipyard. *Establish Waterfront Special Use Zone (WSUZ)* over Portland Company complex and adjacent uplands. Creation of Compass Park on the Maine State Pier.
- 1998** BIW announces 2001 departure. Cargo and Passenger Study (*CAPS, Waterfront I*) recommends concentration of passenger operations in the Eastern Waterfront.
- 2000** *Final Report of the Mayor's Waterfront Task Force on Economic Development (Waterfront II)* recommends creation of Waterfront TIF program and economic investments. *Eastern Waterfront Master Planning and Marine Passenger Terminal Planning* (following *CAPS* recommendations) begin.
- 2004** Adoption of *Eastern Waterfront Master Plan* and *Ocean Gateway Master Plan*. Creation of B-6 Zone, replacing upland portions of the WPDZ and WSUZ.
- ~2005** Sail Maine takes over City recreational sailing program on Eastern Waterfront; it and other "community boating" interests grow on the Eastern Waterfront.
- 2006** Amendment to the *Eastern Waterfront Master Plan* to include *Policy Statement for the Maine State Pier* in preparation for an RFP for redevelopment of the Maine State Pier. Replacement of the WPDZ with *Eastern Waterfront Port Zone (EWPZ)*. Preservation of marine transportation capacity is central to the Policy Statement and new zoning while allowing significant mixed-use development.
- 2008** Opening of Ocean Gateway and new upland street infrastructure implementing first phases of the Eastern Waterfront Master Plan.
- 2006-09** RFP for redevelopment of the Maine State Pier. Two proposals are withdrawn after a highly contentious selection process.
- 2009** Short-term redevelopment planning for Maine State Pier, abandoned with the introduction of Ready Seafood to the south end of the Pier.

**2014-18** Portland Company complex reuse planning and rezoning results in amendments to the B-6 and EWPZ and elimination of the remnant WSUZ.

**2017-18** "Portland Landing" open space planning for the "Amethyst Lot" adjacent to Ocean Gateway.

**2019** Discontinuance of international ferry service at Ocean Gateway. Expansion of street infrastructure consistent with the EW Master Plan, integrating with 15 Fore St. plans for redevelopment. Development in the B-6 on City and private lands (WEX, 100 Fore St.).

### Central Waterfront

**1994** Establish the *Waterfront Central Zone (WCZ)* over historic core of the waterfront between Maine State Pier and the International Marine Terminal. The WCZ allows more non-marine uses (excluding residential) than the adjacent WPDZ, but is still highly protective of water-dependent uses.

**2000-05** Multiple, smaller scale amendments to the WCZ incrementally expand non-marine development and occupancy.

**2006** WCZ Taskforce recommends expanding non-marine use along the entirety of Commercial Street and into the upper floors in existing buildings. Pierce Atwood occupies the Cumberland Storage building on Merrill's Wharf as a result.

**2010** A collaboration among *all* private pier owners on the Central Waterfront prompts the City to rewrite the WCZ. The re-drafted WCZ allows non-marine development in new structures, and on portions of ground floors beyond Commercial Street. A Non-marine Use Overlay eliminates marine use entirely along Commercial Street, but creates a marine infrastructure investment requirement.

**2018-19** Prompted by a controversial hotel proposal, and in response to the fishing community and anti-development activists, the City Manager creates a *Waterfront Working Group* to re-evaluate the 2010 amendments

**2019** City Council adopts recommendations from the *Waterfront Working Group*. The revised WCZ shrinks and renames the non-marine overlay (*Commercial Street Overlay*), eliminates contract/conditional rezoning for the WCZ (eliminating hotel proposals,) and strengthens performance standards protecting water-dependent uses.

### Western Waterfront

**1994** Establish *Waterfront Port Development Zone (WPDZ)* over area from the International Marine Terminal to Cassidy Point and the Merrill's Marine terminal, including rail yard uplands north of West Commercial Street.

**1998** Cargo and Passenger Study (*CAPS, Waterfront I*) recommends concentration of freight operations in the Western Waterfront, resulting in moving international ferry to the Eastern Waterfront.

**2011** State of Maine Port Authority takes over operations of the International Marine Terminal (IMT) and improvements made to the pier and containerized freight yard.

**~2012** Amend WPDZ to rezone rail uplands north of West Commercial Street to B-5 Mixed Use Urban/Commercial zoning.

**2013** Eimskip operations begin at the IMT. Portland Yacht Services aggregates vacant land in the Western Waterfront and begins construction of the Portland Shipyard.

**2014-17** Expansion of IMT to provide capacity for containerized freight growth, resulting in westward shift of the Portland Shipyard. Connection of active rail to container port.

**2016-17** Building height amendments and modernizing redraft of the *Waterfront Port Development Zone*, anticipating cold storage expansion on the International Marine Terminal (still pending) and promoting other industrial expansion (now underway at the Portland Shipyard).

## GREAT WATERFRONTS OF THE WORLD

Founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William H. Whyte and Jane Jacobs, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has since completed projects in more than 3,500 communities in over 50 countries and all 50 U.S. states. It is the premier center for best practices, information, and resources on great place-making. 740 Broadway, Suite 1101 New York, NY 10003  
 info@pps.org | 212.620.5660

The PPS examined more than 200 urban waterfronts around the world, in cities on the sea, river cities, and lakefront cities. While none succeeds as a whole, there are promising elements in each. Which deserve to be called the world's best waterfronts? PPS created two categories. The first, "**Waterfront Cities**," considers the entire waterfront, and *how well it connects by foot to the rest of the city and sustains a variety of public activities in multiple areas*. A second category, "**Waterfront Places**," looks separately at *individual destinations along the water*. *When you experience these extraordinary public spaces, you realize how much more would be possible with a coordinated strategy to make the whole waterfront a place for people*. For illustrations, go to [www.pps.org/article/greatwaterfronts](http://www.pps.org/article/greatwaterfronts).

### Great Waterfront Cities

Stockholm, Sweden  
 Venice, Italy  
 Helsinki, Finland  
 San Sebastian, Spain  
 Sydney, Australia  
 Hamburg, Germany  
 Other: Baltimore  
       Chicago  
       Montreal  
       Nice  
       Porto  
       Rio de Janeiro  
       San Francisco (North)

### Great Waterfront Places

Helsinki plaza & indoor market  
 Paris Plage variety  
 Copenhagen promenade  
 Vancouver marketplace  
 Venice Beach, CA  
 San Antonio Riverwalk  
 Copenhagen Peoples Park  
 Laguna Beach, CA  
 Porto flexible platform  
 Oslo promenade  
 Brighton Beach UK, NY  
 Other: Navy Pier, Chicago  
       Fisherman's Wharf, SF  
       Artillery Park, NO  
       Riverwalk, Chattanooga TN



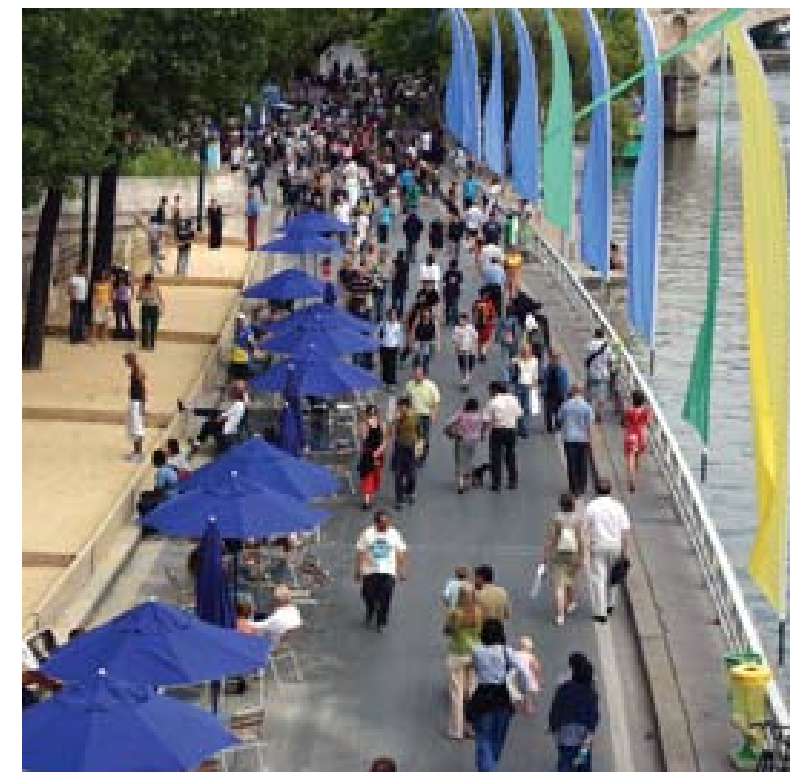
San Sebastian, Spain



Sydney, Australia



Hamburg, Germany



Paris, France

## HOW TO TRANSFORM A WATERFRONT

As cities envision their waterfronts as lively public destinations that keep people coming back, PPS offers the following principles to make this happen. These are rules of thumb drawn from many years of experience working to improve urban waterfronts around the world. They serve as the framework for any waterfront project seeking to create vibrant public spaces and, by extension, a vibrant city. For illustrations go to [www.pps.org/article/turnwaterfrontaround](http://www.pps.org/article/turnwaterfrontaround).



London, England



Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### 1. MAKE PUBLIC GOALS THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The best solutions for waterfronts put public goals first, not short-term financial or commercial expediency.

### 3. CREATE MULTIPLE DESTINATIONS

Set a goal of multiple great destinations along the entire waterfront. Focus on destinations rather than passive “open space.”

### 5. OPTIMIZE PUBLIC ACCESS

It is essential that the waterfront be accessible for people’s use to the greatest extent possible. The goal of continuity is of paramount importance.



Jersey City, New Jersey



Helsinki, Finland



Oslo, Norway

### 2. CREATE A SHARED COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE WATERFRONT

Because a vision is adaptable and can be implemented gradually, it often becomes bolder as public enthusiasm for making changes builds and the transformation of the waterfront gains credibility.

### 4. CONNECT THE DESTINATIONS

Each of the destinations should be incorporated into a vision for the waterfront as a whole. The key is continuity, especially for the pedestrian experience.

### 6. ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT FITS WITH THE VISION

When the public’s vision comes first, new development can be tailored to meet the community’s shared goals.

## HOW TO TRANSFORM A WATERFRONT



Montreal, Canada

### 7. LIMIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Great waterfronts are not dominated by residential development. These are places full of people, day and night, the sites of festivals, markets, fireworks displays, concerts, and other high-energy gatherings.



Cleveland, Ohio

### 8. USE PARKS TO CONNECT DESTINATIONS

Passive open space puts a damper on the inherent vibrancy of waterfronts. The world's best waterfronts use open space as connective tissue, to link major destinations.



Auckland, New Zealand

### 9. DESIGN AND PROGRAM BUILDINGS TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC SPACE

Any building on the waterfront should add to the activity of the public spaces around it. When successful, the result is an ideal combination of commercial and public uses.



Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

### 10. SUPPORT MULTIPLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION, LIMIT VEHICULAR ACCESS

Waterfronts are enhanced when accessed by means other than private vehicles. Without cars or parking lots, people are more at ease, and the full breadth of waterfront activity can flourish. Commercial deliveries to local businesses are an important exception.



Brighton, England

### 11. INTEGRATE SEASONAL ACTIVITIES INTO EACH DESTINATION

Coastal places are often known for their chilly winds and gray skies. Programming should take rainy-day and winter activities into account, and amenities should provide protection from the weather.



Stockholm, Sweden

### 12. MANAGE, MANAGE, MANAGE

Ongoing management is essential to maintain waterfronts and sustain a diverse variety of activities and events throughout the year.

PLATFORM FOR A NEW PORTLAND HARBOR COMMON



IMAGE 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

PLATFORM FOR A NEW PORTLAND HARBOR COMMON



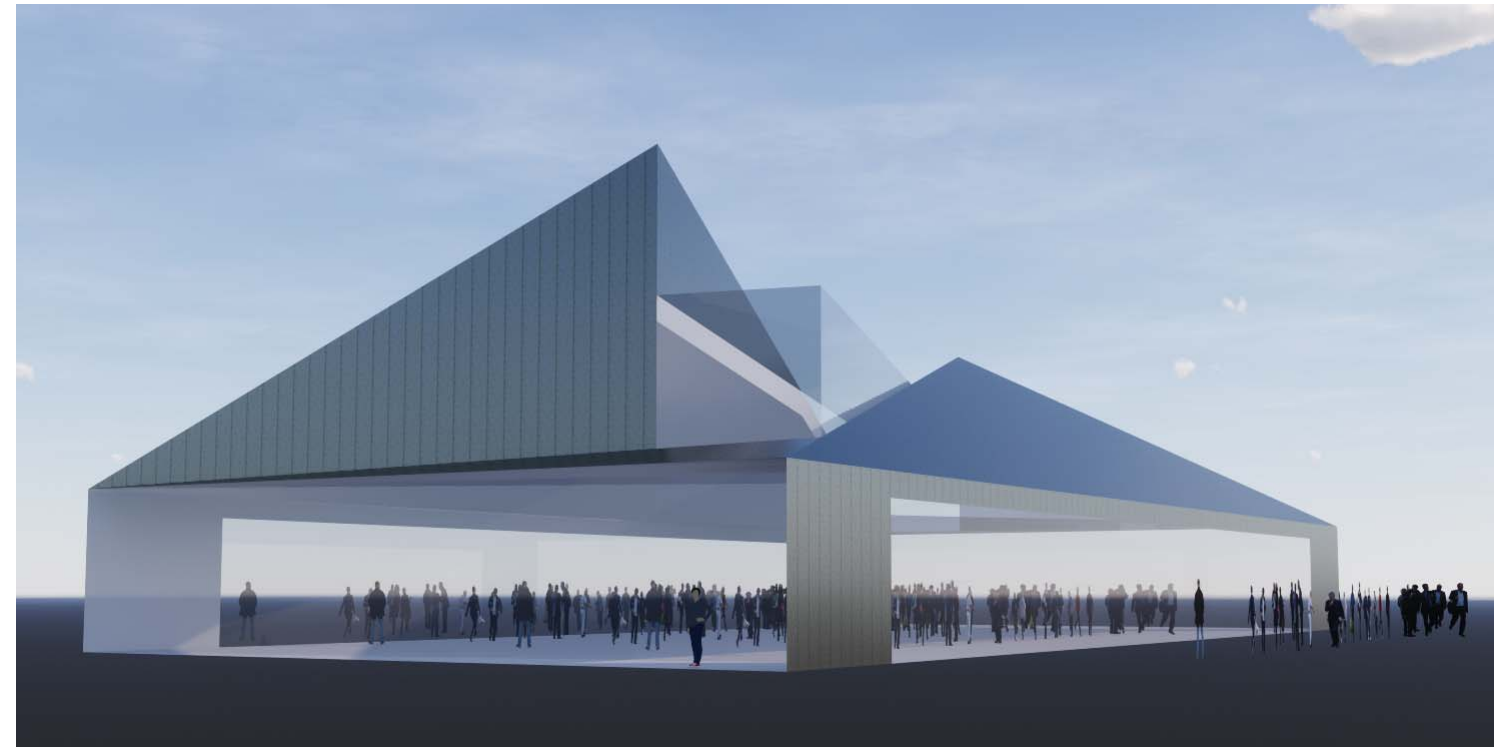
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|--|--|
| 1. Casco Bay Lines   | 16. Children's Playground                            |
| 2. Compass Park  | 17. Multi-Purpose Field                              |
| 3. Future Portland/SoPo Ferry                                      | 18. Thames Street Plaza                              |
| 4. Pier 1 Berth 1  | 19. Public Landing                                   |
| 5. Maine State Pier Plaza  | 20. Native Coastal Gardens                           |
| 6. Public Pavilion   | 21. Foreside Plaza                                   |
| 7. Event Lawns (2)   | 22. Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Depot                |
| 8. India Street Pier and Shelters                                  | 23. India Street Plaza                               |
| 9. Multi-Purpose Plaza (70 parking spaces)                         | 24. Eastern Promenade Trailhead                      |
| 10. Moon Tide Plaza  | 25. Transportation Hub                               |
| 11. Ocean Gateway Terminal Building and/or Future Community Center | 26. Franklin Roundabout                              |
| 12. Moon Tide Park   | 27. Franklin Street Pedestrian and Bike Improvements |
| 13. Pier 2 Berth 1   |  |
| 14. Ocean Gateway Receiving Station                                |  |
| 15. Pier 2 Birth 2   |  |

IMAGE 3 PROPOSED PLATFORM

**PLATFORM FOR A NEW PORTLAND HARBOR COMMON**



Public Pavilion Key Plan



Concept Rendering 1



Concept Rendering 2

**IMAGE 4 CONCEPT RENDERINGS OF PUBLIC PAVILION (#6 on Platform For A New Portland Harbor Common)**