

## Garden Of Surging Waves Moves Forward

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Two contractors, Robinson Construction of Hillsboro and JP Contractors of Portland responded to the bid solicitation for construction of the Garden of Surging Waves in downtown Astoria.

Negotiations are currently underway with the low-bid contractor, Robinson, whose proposal also calls for work to be performed by local subcontractors. Robinson's work is well known in the area, and includes major projects like Lewis & Clark Elementary School and the Astoria Middle and High School remodels.

Robinson's proposal totals \$1.28 million as submitted, which is beyond the \$900,000 to \$1.1 million suggested by the project's architect. "We're meeting with Robinson Construction this week to discuss opportunities for additional cost efficiencies," said Astoria City Manager Paul Benoit. Benoit noted that it is not unusual for a contractor's bid to vary from the architect's cost estimate, particularly when the project is so unique and involves installation of public art. "We had no way of knowing exactly what our hard costs would be until we went out for bid. After we talk with Robinson's team this week, we'll know with more certainty what our final number is. This is just the next step in the process," he said.

To date, approximately \$950,000 has been committed to construction of the Garden of Surging Waves project — including \$505,000 in public funds and \$445,000 in private funds. Private contributions are comprised of grants from foundations, and donations from hundreds of businesses and individuals. Contributions have come primarily from Astoria and Portland, though gifts have been received from throughout the Pacific Northwest.

"We anticipated our committed funds would be short of the final bid," said Astoria Mayor Willis Van Dusen. "After this week, we'll know where our finish line is and we'll make a final push to cross it," he said. "This is Astoria's Bicentennial Legacy Gift, marking an important milestone in our history — much like the purchase of Coxcomb Hill marked the city's Centennial in 1911. It's exciting to be so close to all of this becoming a reality. I want to assure the people of Astoria and our supporters outside the city that we are approaching this responsibly and will not enter into a contract agreement until we have our funding secured. We're so close. I don't expect it will be long."

Construction is expected to take approximately four months under optimum conditions. Benoit says there would be obvious weather advantages to constructing the project in the summer. "That would actually work in our favor," Benoit said. "By getting our hard costs settled now, we know exactly what funds remain to be raised, and we can use this brief window of time to do it before summer arrives."

Benoit stated that until all funds are secured for the Garden of Surging Waves, fundraising efforts and expenses will be focused on the Garden rather than the broader Heritage Square project. "We are approaching Heritage Square incrementally. We want to show results to our donors and our community as soon as possible, so completion of the Garden of Surging Waves is the highest priority for now," he said.

When negotiations with Robinson are complete, a construction contract will be presented to City Council for review. "If Council likes the numbers they see, we'll be able to wrap up our fundraising effort and get a contract signed for construction. Then we'll be off and running," Van Dusen said.

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