

Astoria's artisan-built garden surges ahead

By Chelsea Gorrow

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The Garden of Surging Waves is coming along nicely, with completion on schedule for the end of November, City Manager Paul Benoit said.

But although community members may see a lack of substantial activity on the site right now, things will start picking up shortly as the behind the scenes work comes forward.

“Some of the project elements are being constructed by artisans, such as the glass mosaic, the big lantern fixture, the timber structure that will go over the marble columns,” Benoit explained to the City Council Monday.

“That’s all being worked on now by artists off-site in their own studios, but that will be coming together soon and we can expect some dramatic changes. Right now it’s artisan work versus earth moving work. But the progress is good.”

Assistant City Manager and Community Development Director Brett Estes said the timber to go around the columns should show up next week. Most of the artisans are in the Portland area and were prequalified by a committee before the project went out to bid, he said.

The Pavilion for the project is scheduled to be installed later this month. Cast-stone blocks will arrive in the next couple of weeks.

“We are anticipating quite a bit of action for the rest of October and into early November, when pieces start showing up and start getting installed,” Estes said. A few glass pieces, including prisms for the donor screen and a lantern for the pavilion, may not arrive until later, Estes said, because they were delayed. But the park will be open before those pieces arrive.

The contract for the garden is \$1.39 million. It is the city’s Bicentennial Legacy Gift.

The committee that prequalified the artists, to ensure a high quality, was established by Mayor Willis Van Dusen, and included the garden’s designer Suenn Ho, city staff members and Dulcye Taylor of the Downtown Association.

The Garden is a tribute to the Chinese Astorians who were instrumental in the city’s development, working on the jetties, the railroad and the canneries. Their contribution to the community, however, was ignored for decades as the Chinese were insulted and targets of racism. Supporters of the garden aim to change that and the city leaders hope it eventually will be one part in the larger block development of Heritage Square. The square will work to honor all of Astoria’s

ancestors. It will feature an amphitheater and a plaza for the Sunday Market.

The square is located at the corners of 11th and Duane streets, where the former basement of the torn-down Safeway store collapsed in 2010, leaving a hole in the center of the city neighboring City Hall.