

Spring Newsletter

2025



Sixty years of Port growth

The Port of Sunnyside was officially formed in 1964 after local voters approved the formation of a Port District in November 1964. The first meeting of the Port took place in December with Richard Golob, Bill Barnard and Van Nutley as Port Commissioners.

As noted by Jay Hester “The Port was established with a clear mission: to develop diversify, broaden and strengthen the economic base throughout our district in an environmentally prudent manner.”

From its inception, the Port focused on creating an environment conducive to industrial development. One of its earliest and most critical projects was the creation of the Sunnyside Industrial Park. To support this, the Port developed roads, utility infrastructure, and most notably, an industrial wastewater treatment facility. Completed in 1974 and subsequently expanded, this facility was essential in attracting food processors and other manufacturers that required wastewater management capabilities. Today, the Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility remains a key asset, enabling businesses to operate sustainably and efficiently.

Over the decades, the Port of Sunnyside has steadily expanded its holdings and capabilities. Strategic land acquisitions allowed for the growth of the industrial



Executive Director Jay Hester and Port Commissioner Tyler Schilperoort go over notes during the Port anniversary event.

Anniversary noted

On September 27, 2024, the Port held their 60th anniversary celebration at Co Dinn Cellars. The event highlighted the Port's accomplishments over the last 60 years.

Speeches were given by Commissioner Schilperoort, Executive Director Jay Hester, and Yakima County Commissioner LaDon Linde. Light refreshments were served and an afternoon of reminiscing about the Port's contributions to the community of Sunnyside were shared.

Earlier in the year a 60th anniversary logo was launched in preparation for the milestone year. Port staff donned t-shirts with the anniversary logo and special 60th anniversary promo items were shared with all in attendance.

park and the development of new industrial zones. The Port also invested in critical infrastructure, including rail spurs that connected businesses to national rail lines, further enhancing the area's attractiveness to manufacturers and distributors.

Leadership at the Port

has played a pivotal role in its success. Long-serving executive directors such as Amber Hansen and Jay Hester helped guide the Port through periods of growth, forming partnerships with state and federal agencies to secure funding for major capital projects. Their efforts led to infrastructure investments

that supported both new and existing businesses, keeping Sunnyside competitive in the region.

The impact of the Port on the city of Sunnyside has been profound. Today, more than a dozen businesses operate within Port-owned or Port-supported facilities, including food processing plants, cold storage warehouses, packaging companies, and other manufacturing operations. These businesses provide over 1,500 direct jobs, with additional employment generated through indirect and induced effects.

“We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the visionaries who laid the groundwork for this port.”

- Jay Hester

Economically, the Port has contributed tens of millions of dollars annually to the local economy. According to recent estimates, Port-associated businesses generate over \$100 million in total economic output per year, including wages, taxes, and business revenues. The tax revenue alone supports local schools, roads, and public services, making the Port not only a job creator but a critical public asset.

Looking ahead, the Port of Sunnyside continues to plan for future growth through land acquisitions, environmental stewardship, and infrastructure upgrades. With a strong foundation built over sixty years and a clear vision for the future, the Port remains a cornerstone of Sunnyside and the Lower Valley's economic vitality and a testament to the power of community-led development.

THANK YOU JAY HESTER

Jay Hester started his career at the Port as project manager from 2007 to 2011 then was rehired in August of 2012 by Amber Hansen to replace her upon her retirement in 2013.

The past 12 years have been full of challenges and changes which Hester along with Port staff met head-on.

Some of the notable accomplishments include

developing Golobs Landing Business Park, overseeing the construction of the Port's digester taking the Port from sprayfields to full treatment, bringing both Varietal Brewing and Co Dinn Cellars to town, completing several land purchases as well as being awarded Job Creator of the Year by the Washington Public Ports Association in 2018 and

being named Port of the Year by the Washington Public Ports Association in 2019.

Hester said of his tenure that he had a wonderful, satisfying time working for the Port and was pleased to have done so in his home town.

We wish Jay the best at his new position as Economic Development Director for the Port of Walla Walla.



Jay Hester

Navarro takes the reins as Port Director



**Port of Sunnyside
Executive Director Lucia Navarro**

In February 2025, Lucia Navarro was appointed as the Port of Sunnyside's new Executive Director following the departure of Jay Hester. Lucia brings a deep understanding of Port operations having previously served as the Administrative Assistant at the Port of Sunnyside from 2015 to 2022. During that time, she worked closely with Hester on securing funding for redevelopment projects, managed key administrative functions such as Public Records, overseeing the Port office and supporting commission meetings while processing accounts payable, receivables, and payroll.

Her prior work with the Department of Ecology further strengthened her expertise in funding opportunities and compliance with reporting requirements. With an academic background in Business Administration and Human Resources Management, Lucia transitioned in 2022 to become the Human Resources Manager for the City of Sunnyside. In this role, she oversaw recruitment, onboarding, benefits administration, compliance, policy development, and labor relations.

Lucia returns to the Port enthusiastic about its current initiatives and is eager to build on its momentum. She is committed to advancing the Port's mission to foster economic growth and development in the region.

Port welcomes two new team members

Maria Maldonado was hired as a Port Lab Analyst in June 2024. She previously worked for Pace International (a Pathology and Microbiology lab) and before that Milne for nine years.

She's enjoyed learning all the new things that the Port lab has introduced her to. She credits most of her knowledge to taking microbiology classes but says that she's often learned more on the job at each place she's worked continuing to expand her knowledge.

Maria and husband Felipe have two daughters. She also has three grandchildren, and enjoys spending time with them on the weekends. When not with family she and Felipe enjoy finding fun things to do.



**Maria
Maldonado**

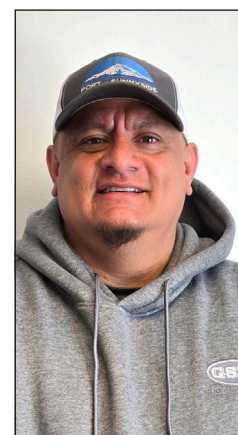
Mike Castilleja was hired this past September as a Facility Technician.

He previously worked for six years at Roza Irrigation.

He and wife Delores have four sons and two daughters as well as one grandson plus a granddaughter on the way.

He has enjoyed his time at the Port and is eager to learn more about the Ultra Filtration System. He finds it refreshing that there's something different to do every day and referred to his new position as a blessing.

During his free time, he loves being a sports dad and enjoys coaching his son's football team.



**Miguel "Mike"
Castilleja**



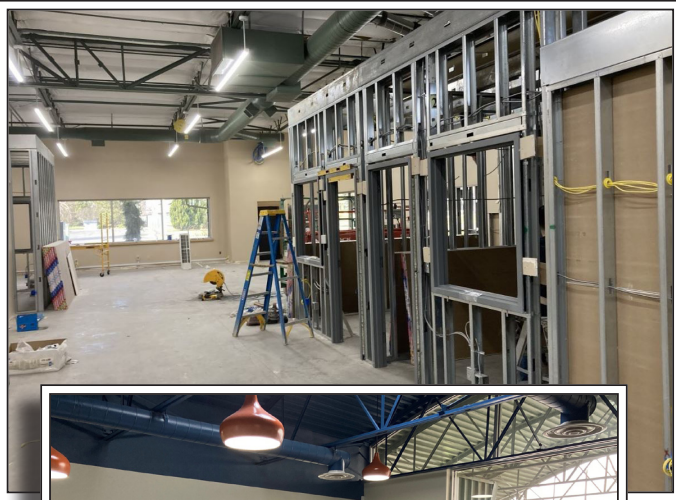
Inspire moves into Golob Landing facility

In 2023 Inspire Development Center contacted the Port of Sunnyside with interest in leasing the Port administration office and Suite 4, formally the Fastenal retail space, located in the Golob Landing Building.

Inspire has served the community for more than 40 years with dedicated services supporting families through comprehensive early childhood education and related services was in need of a larger facility. The center had outgrown their 6th Street location and the new location would house the entire administrative staff, HR, Finance and IT departments.

The Port agreed to the move and put the project out to bid in early January 2024 with M. Seigny Construction being awarded the contract.

Construction began at the end of January with an anticipated completion date of May 10, 2024. Upon completion of the Suite 4 project, Inspire continued with renovations of Suites 2 & 3 of the building, finishing up with the remodel of Suite 1. The newly remodeled building included the addition of several new offices, an updated conference room, large training room with kitchen and additional restrooms. All four suites are now accessible through interior doors and hallways. Inspire now occupies all 13,596 square feet of the newly remodeled office space.



New business secured for Planter's Hotel building

Shortly after the July closing of Hoptown Wood-Fired Pizza, the Port received several inquiries as to what would be going into what was now referred to as the Planter's Hotel Building.

The site which the Port had purchased in January of 2020 had gone through extensive clean up and construction in 2021 and 2022 and on November 17, 2023 opened as Hoptown Wood-Fired Pizza.

After their closure the Executive Director, and Project team were tasked with putting together a plan to allow interested parties to submit business plans to the Port. Based on whether they were an established business or a new business, the team created a two-part process for the applicants.



Applicants had to submit a business plan and then go through an interview process for more in-depth follow up questioning. The two phases were graded based on pre-determined criteria and presented to the commissioners for review. The Port Project Team then decided which business plan to move forward with.

Out of the four business proposals submitted a local entrepreneur was the winning selection. The new business intends to offer a family-oriented pizza

restaurant inspired by flavors of Mexico. The restaurant will also offer other selections, but the menu is under wraps until the big reveal. The business owner is working to be up and running by early May.

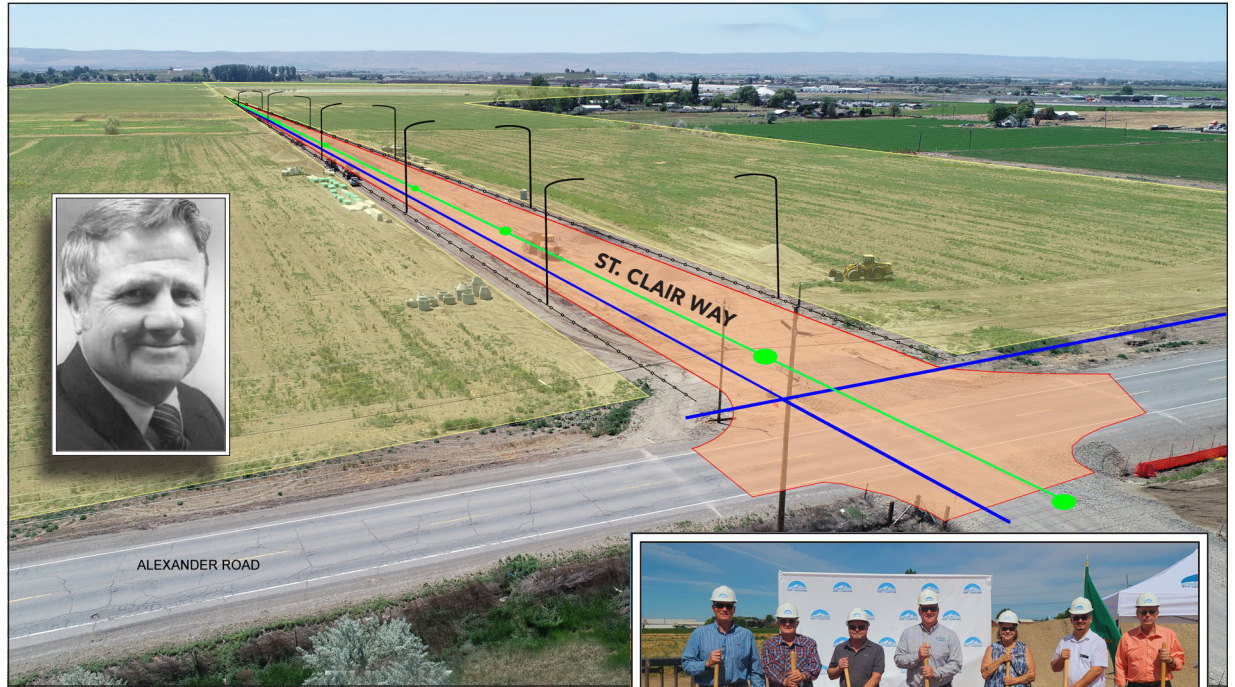
Midvale Road project nears completion

The Midvale Road Project will open up access to 200 acres of prime development property for the Port of Sunnyside's Midvale Industrial Park.

The project is located between Midvale and Sunnyside Mabton Hwy (Hwy 241) running south off of Alexander Road. The new road will be named St. Clair Way after St. Clair "Woody" Woodworth who retired in 2009 having served 19 years as a Port of Sunnyside Commissioner.

The infrastructure project is part of the purchase and sale agreement with Sunnyside RNG (Pacific Ag). It is a collaborative effort between the City of Sunnyside and Port utilizing grant and loan opportunities through SIED, CERB, and the Dept. of Commerce.

Included in the new project is approximately



The new road will be named St. Clair Way after St. Clair Woodworth, (inset) former Port Commissioner.

2,300 tons of hot mix asphalt (HMA), 5,600 LF curb and gutter, 4,900 LF of gravity sewer, 3,600 LF of force main sewer, 9,200 LF of new water main, a complete sanitary lift station, an industrial lift station

without pumps, valves, or electrical connections for future extension and completion, plus 3,300 LF of irrigation improvements. Also included in the plan is an additive bid schedule for an additional 800 tons of



Project groundbreaking June 20, 2024

HMA and 2,150 LF curb and gutter.

Interwest Construction Inc., was the low bidder on the project in the

amount of \$8,298,767.76. Construction began May 20, 2024 and is scheduled to reach completion the spring of 2025.

Dredging completed

Port of Sunnyside's lagoon 2/3 underwent a long awaited dredging it hadn't seen for nearly 30 years.

The 7.5 acre lagoon which is 10 ft. deep had approximately 4.5 ft. of sludge that needed to be removed to bring it back to full capacity.

The project was put out to bid in April, 2024 with American Process Group being awarded the bid for \$2,747,562.

The project consisted of the removal, dewatering, and disposal of the accumulated pond solids in Lagoon 2/3 at the Port of Sunnyside Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility (IWWTF). In addition, all aerators and the lagoon baffle curtain were removed and demolished.

Crews from the American Process Group worked 24 hours a day, five days a week removing a total of 3,314 dry tons of material. More than 300 truckloads of sludge were hauled to Natural Selection Farms for composting.



Port receives 2024 Impact Award

Each year the Infrastructure Coordinating Council (IACC) a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Washington communities and tribes identify and obtain resources they need to develop, improve, and maintain infrastructure hosts a conference. This conference brings together staff from state and federal agencies, local government associations, and nonprofit technical assistance organizations.

This past October 22-24, Nikki Jech, Port of Sunnyside Contract Specialist, had the opportunity to attend the conference held at the Wenatchee Convention Center.

The conference, with their many workshops, is a fantastic opportunity for local government representatives to connect with state and federal



Pictured L/R, Michael Battle (HLA), Janea Stark (CERB), Angie Ringer (HLA), Nicole Jech (Port), Rob Scott (HLA), Stephanie Ray (HLA), and Stafani Harris(HLA)

programs designed to assist with infrastructure needs.

One of the benefits of the conference was hearing about

innovative programs that are making a real difference. Nikki noted how inspiring it was to see so many dedicated individuals

working together to strengthen their communities.

A highlight of the conference was the announcement of the Port of Sunnyside as this year's IACC Community Impact Award winner for their Midvale Industrial Park project. A special thank you goes out to HLA Engineering for not only the nomination, but also their level of professionalism and expertise that they have brought to the project.

As the conference came to an end, it became clear that the IACC is more than just a coordinating body; it's a community in itself. The relationships being built through the partnerships and interaction of the attendees have the potential to create lasting impacts on our infrastructure and the lives of those we serve.



Medical Assistance program coming soon

Perry Technical Institute, located at 437 Barnard Blvd in Sunnyside, is expanding its campus to include a six-month Medical Assistant program, set to commence in June 2025. This initiative aims to provide accessible healthcare education to the Lower Yakima Valley, addressing the growing demand for trained medical professionals in rural communities.

The program will accommodate 16 students per cohort, offering a blend of classroom instruction and clinical practice.

Curriculum will encompass both administrative and clinical skills, including medical terminology, pharmacology, patient interaction, and procedures like phlebotomy and EKGs.

Students will also gain proficiency in managing medical records, billing, coding, and scheduling. The program concludes with an off-campus externship, providing real-world experience. This expansion reflects Perry Tech's commitment to equipping students with practical skills for entry-level positions in various healthcare settings, such as physician offices, outpatient clinics, and hospitals.



PORT OF SUNNYSIDE COMMISSIONERS
Jim Grubenhoff, Arnold Martin,
and Tyler Schilperoort

Lucia Navarro
Executive
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