Fort Vancouver National Site
(Vancouver National Historic Reserve)

Project Summary
Fort Vancouver National Site (officially the Vancouver National Historic Reserve), a 366-acre historic site adjacent to downtown Vancouver, was created by Congress in 1996. The partners in the site are the City of Vancouver, National Park Service, U.S. Army (who vacated the site in 2010), the State of Washington and the Fort Vancouver National Trust. The goal of the Fort Vancouver partnership is to preserve the historic structures and cultural resources, provide education and interpretation on the history and significance of the site and make it available for public use and enjoyment.

Property Ownership
With the U.S. Army relinquishing ownership of their property at Fort Vancouver to the National Park Service in 2012, the Park Service and the City are now the two property owners at Fort Vancouver National Site. The City owns Officer Row, the West Vancouver Barracks, Pearson Airfield and the Water Resources Education Center. The National Park Services owns Fort Vancouver (which includes the parade grounds and the Visitor Center) and the East and South Vancouver Barracks.

Officers Row
Officer’s Row, the 22 restored historic homes that line Evergreen Blvd, have been adaptively reused as a mix of residential units, commercial space and three public buildings — the Grant House (restaurant), the George C. Marshall House (museum, meeting/reception space and Congressional offices) and the O.O. Howard House (meeting space, Congressional office and headquarters of the Fort Vancouver Trust).
West Vancouver Barracks

The West Vancouver Barracks is comprised of 16 buildings (132,211 sq.ft.) directly to the east of I-5. The West Barracks Reuse Plan, adopted by the Vancouver City Council in 2002, calls for the Barracks to be adaptively reused with a focus on arts, education and hospitality. Under the direction of the City and Fort Vancouver Trust, the buildings are in various stages of rehabilitation. Key buildings include the 1917 Red Cross Convalescent Center (meeting/reception space), the Artillery Barracks (partial restored, meeting/event space) and the Post Hospital (vacant). The West Barracks also includes the Infantry Barracks (vacant), Quarter Master’s Storehouse (vacant), Mess Hall (culinary school) and Dental Surgeon’s Office (vacant) plus 14 duplexes and 2 single family residences (leased as residential units).

Pearson Field

One of the oldest operating airfields in the country, Pearson Field is a general aviation airport that was recently designated as a “Historic Aerospace Site” by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. 150 aircraft, a mix of commercial and recreational users, are based at Pearson Field. The National Park Service owns the western half of Pearson’s runway for which the City has a 40 year lease agreement (through 2051). Pearson Field operates as a self-sustaining “enterprise fund”, and receives no financial support from the City.

Water Resources Education Center

The Water Resources Education Center, although inside the designated boundaries of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, is not part of the national historic district. The Water Center is operated by the City’s Public Works Department and serves as an education center and meeting space.
Role of the Fort Vancouver Trust

The Fort Vancouver National Trust (Trust) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), incorporated in 1998 to assist with the development and operation of Fort Vancouver National Site. The Trust plays a lead role the site through the work of committees including a Long-Range Planning Committee, Education Committee and Property Management Committee. The Trust produces a robust series of civic and educational events including the Marshall Lecture, Marshall Leadership Awards, Flag Day, Veterans Day Parade and Independence Day at Fort Vancouver.

The Trust has a master lease agreement with the City to manage the operation and development of Officers Row and the West Barracks. The lease was recently extended through 2018. Under the Trust’s management, the buildings and landscaping are well maintained and the commercial and residential units are typically 100% occupied. Officer Row and the West Barracks are self-sustaining and receive no general fund support from the City. Through an agreement with the National Park Service, the Trust also operates the gift shop in the Fort Vancouver Visitor Center.

Relationship with the National Park Service

Fort Vancouver attracts over 1 million visitors per year and is one of the most visited National Parks in the Pacific Northwest. The National Park Service owns the reconstructed Fort, the Parade Grounds (including the bandstand), the Visitor Center, the western half of the runway at Pearson Field, Pearson Air Museum and the East and South Vancouver Barracks. The educational and interpretive programs offered by the Park Service are one of the primary attractions for visitors.

The Vancouver National Historic Reserve is on the National Register of Historic Places. Through that designation and through contractual agreements, the Park Service serves as the lead organization for the management of historic and cultural resources on the entire site, including City-owned property. They perform all archeological work at Fort Vancouver, work with the State, City and Trust to ensure compliance with historic preservation regulations and curate over 2 million artifacts related to the site.

Pearson Air Museum

The City sold the property and buildings that comprise the Air Museum complex to the National Park Service in 1971. In the late 90’s the City, working with a group of aviation enthusiasts, reached agreement with the Park Service to use the facilities to develop Pearson Air Museum. The City agreed
to be responsible for the operations of the Museum and sub-contracted the management first to the Pearson Field Historical Society and then to the Fort Vancouver Trust. In 20..., the City notified the Park Service that due to budget constraints, the City would no longer be able to financially support the museum operations, and encouraged the Park Service to contract directly with the Trust for operation of the Museum. Contract negotiations were unsuccessful and the City, Park Service and Trust are now in mediation regarding the future of the Museum.

Policy Issues

- The 2002 West Barracks Reuse Plan was adopted by Council during different economic times. The feasibility of reusing the buildings as arts, education and hospitality venues – with no financial support from the City - may need to be revisited.

- The Trust, City and Park Service are in negotiations regarding the operation of Pearson Air Museum. It is currently unclear what role the City may be asked to play in the management of the Museum.

- The uncertainty surrounding the future of the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) calls into question whether the Post Hospital Building, located on the eastern edge of I-5, can be preserved and successfully reused.

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