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Astoria Chinese Heritage Park leaps ahead

City to apply for \$600,000 Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department grant

By **SANDRA SWAIN**
The Daily Astorian

With Duncan Law and other members of the Chinese Park Committee looking on, the Astoria City Council voted unanimously Monday to apply for a \$600,000 Local Government Grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to help pay for design and construction of the Astoria Chinese Heritage Park.

The park will be at Ninth and Astor streets, across from the Transit Center. Deadline to submit the grant application is April 3.

The grant requires a 40 percent, \$400,000 match, which will be funded by \$32,362 in donations raised by the Chinese Park Committee, a \$147,000 federal grant secured earlier with the help of U.S. Rep. David Wu, and \$220,000 in cash donations, agency labor, and material and equipment donations. Total cost of the Chinese Park project is estimated at \$1 million: \$70,000 for design and \$930,000 for construction and

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Artistic rendering courtesy of Suenn Ho, Mulvanny G2 Architecture

A prominent feature of the Astoria Chinese Heritage Park to be constructed at Ninth and Astor streets is a moon gate, a circular entryway made of cast bronze and shaped like the Greek letter Omega. Total cost of design and construction of the park is estimated at \$1 million.



Artistic rendering courtesy of Suenn Ho, Mulvanny G2 Architecture Plans for the Astoria Chinese Heritage Park are nearing completion. The park will be built on the site of an existing park at Ninth and Astor streets at an estimated total cost of \$1 million, funded mainly by donations and grants.

Read the Letter

Huo Bao Zhu, owner of a foundry in Xi' an, China, has

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The vote to apply for the state grant came after a PowerPoint presentation by **Suenn Ho, senior designer at Mulvanny G2 Architecture** in Portland.

The focal point of her artistic renderings of the park is the moon gate, a circular entryway made of cast bronze and shaped like the Greek letter Omega. "When you come through the moon gate you're in a time capsule," Ho said.

Among the park's other features will be a donor screen with names etched in glass on the west side of the park, a screen on the south side of the park, lettered with historical references, and a concrete bench along the east side of the park that represents a historic timeline. There will also be a chess-playing area and a "pavilion of transition" with columns of wood and stone. Long concrete pavers will symbolize the floorboards of the canneries where so many Chinese people in Astoria worked, including Duncan Law, who went on to become a professor at Oregon State University. Astoria's Seafood Consumer Center is named in his honor.

Ho said a low stone wall that's a feature of the existing park will be retained as an homage to architect Robert Murase, who designed a park for the same site in 2004 that turned out to be too industrial looking for many Astoria residents, including Mayor Willis Van Dusen and the City Council. It was one of Murase's last projects before he died.

A "platform of heritage" on the side of the Chinese park closest to the riverfront is the proposed location for a 500-pound traditional Chinese bell made of cast bronze, which will be donated by Huo Baozhu, owner of a foundry in Xi' an, China, called Sanxxi Five Rings Sculptural Arts Co. Ltd., which reproduces Chinese antiquities. Huo is donating the bell, which is worth \$10,000, as part of a debt of gratitude he feels he owes to the United States after a Portland physician treated him for a rare form of leukemia 11 years ago.

He had been given just two years to live by his Chinese doctor, when an American friend urged Huo to seek treatment here. The Portland doctor predicted eight more years of life, Huo wrote in a letter addressed jointly to Astoria Mayor Van Dusen and Portland Mayor Sam Adams, which Van Dusen read aloud at the Council meeting. Huo has already exceeded that prediction by three years.

The donated bell is part of \$50,000 of bronze artwork Huo is producing for the Chinese Park at cost, about half the usual price.

"I got the impression that what he's doing is donating the artwork, the bronze castings, at his cost, but over and above that, he'll donate the bell. It'll just be a gift," City Manager Paul Benoit said. "I think all around it's an incredibly generous deal and kind of unusual. It's unusual that this is a person in China who has an odd connection to the United States and just wants to give back."

Ho said she was first approached about the Chinese Park project in 2005 by Ed Overbay, a member of the Chinese Park Committee who is a local craftsman and historical preservationist. The original proposal was to create a classical Chinese garden like the one in Portland. Ho said she suggested a park that celebrates Chinese history as an alternative, because it is more financially feasible.

offered to create and sell cast bronze sculptures at cost to the city of Astoria for the Chinese Heritage Park, and to donate a traditional bell made of bronze. He has also created bronze sculptures for Portland, including a life-size bronze elephant for the Park blocks that he donated in 2002. Huo explains in the letter that his friendship with the United States began when a Portland doctor treated him for leukemia. The letter, written in Chinese, and addressed to the mayors of Astoria and Portland, was translated by Suenn Ho, of Mulvanny G2 Architecture in Portland, who is designing the Astoria Chinese Heritage Park.

[\(Click Here\)](#) to download PDF version of Sanxxi Five Rings Sculptural Arts Co. Ltd. Letter.

