

Port of Vancouver

Strategic Planning Process

SWOT Findings

As part of the Strategic Plan Update process, a series of meetings were held with the Port of Vancouver (Port) Commission, Executive Leadership Team, and staff in November and December 2017. A core element of each of these meetings was a facilitated discussion of Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities (SWOT). The purpose of the SWOT analysis was to evaluate current conditions of the organization and to prioritize areas for goal and strategy development.

This document provides a summary of the input received in the SWOT analysis. Information is included to indicate whether the input was received from the Port Commission or from staff. Explanatory comments provide additional context for some statements. It is important to note that the comments listed below are the perceptions and opinions expressed by the participants. The comments have not been reviewed or analyzed for their accuracy. The terms Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat were defined as follows for this analysis.

- Strengths: The best attributes, skills, and capacities that make the organization successful (typically internal)
- Weaknesses: Areas in which the organization needs to improve
- Opportunities: Probable circumstances for which the organization is well suited to explore
- Threats: External factors or trends the organization has little, if any, control over

	Explanatory Comment
STRENGTHS	
Good relationships: Local ports (Ridgefield, Camas-Washougal & Portland) and other local governments.	Some concern expressed to improve relationships with local governments in Clark County including the City of Vancouver.
Good relationships: Federal and state agencies and delegation, highlighted by the Port's efforts in river dredging initiatives.	
Ample land inventory with capacity for commercial/industrial real estate expansion including Terminal 5, Columbia Gateway, and Terminal 1.	
Marine terminals located on well-managed navigable river with deep draft (43').	
Diverse tenant mix.	The Port has made a conscious effort in recent years to diversify the types of businesses at the Port.

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	Explanatory Comment
The Port's facilities have multi-modal access with expanded rail capacity (with the West Vancouver Freight Access (WVFA) project) and close proximity to highways.	There is a clear acceptance of the increasing amount of surface transportation congestion and conflicts.
Affordable and reliable electric power.	
Clean, well-maintained facilities.	
Innovative, entrepreneurial, & talented staff.	Skill & knowledge of the maintenance team was noted on several occasions. Well compensated with good benefits that allows the Port to attract top talent; integrity is a well held value.
Cargo Services: Well established cargo contracts; industry (market) recognition; superior cargo capacity following significant investment, and a healthy relationship with PILOT's system.	
The Port understands its business model; operates in a good business environment; and is willing to pursue opportunities.	
Financial capacity in the long term.	Common understanding of where the Port is in the investment cycle (that significant capital investments have been made and will be paid off in coming years).
Reputation for delivering on initiatives (community leader).	
Investments in efficiency (information technology (IT), facilities, systems, rail).	
Strong labor apprenticeship programs.	
Presence of reliable vocational education institutions that are supported by the community.	
Good labor relationships.	

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	Explanatory Comment
WEAKNESSES	
Inexperience in urban development & commercial development.	The Terminal 1 development project is a new type of undertaking for the Port.
Maintenance work is reactive not pro-active.	
Growing congestion on surface roads, including conflicts with neighborhoods.	Local and regional issue.
Challenges with what is effectively a single rail carrier.	BNSF is effectively the sole freight rail service provided at the Port as it controls competitor use of the track system.
Internal communications.	
Need to improve administrative facility and consider co-locating other functions (cargo, project management, etc).	
Financial capacity following recent capital investment cycle.	Port has taken on significant debt to support large projects such as WVFA.
Strained relationship with the community following the recent oil terminal proposal and permitting effort.	
Cost structure poses increasing obstacles to remaining competitive in the market.	Concern with costs of doing business in an international market place caused by State regulatory requirements for such things as competitive purchasing. Difficult to operate in a private market place with governmental overlay.
Aging condition of buildings, information technology (IT) equipment, systems and facilities & relative locations.	Acknowledgment that IT is being addressed, concern with pace.
Lack of an external understanding of the Port's role, difficulty in telling the story to the Port's many audiences and constituents.	
Improve clarity of direction & strategic direction.	Not a complete internal understanding of the significance of the core marine cargo business to the Port and industry.

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	Explanatory Comment
THREATS	
Changing dynamic in the regulatory environment.	
Rate of technical systems and approaches in the cargo industry.	Changing technology in bulk and break-bulk cargo handling
Continuing external perception that the Port has tremendous and flexible resources.	Sense that external parties assume the Port has more resources and capability than it does.
Continuing confusion between Vancouver, BC and Vancouver, WA.	
Potential for national trade sanctions and unpredictability of the US foreign trade policy.	
Tension with organized environmental groups, that are often regional and national in focus.	
I-5 Columbia River Bridge congestions impacting shared economy with Oregon and the region.	
Impact of climate change on agricultural products that are an important commodity shipped through the Port.	
Lack of demand for containerized cargo.	
Potential for removal of dams on the Columbia River and resulting disruptions of river cargo shipping.	
Changes (growth) in light cargo delivery (rail to truck).	
Regional surface transportation infrastructure.	
Conflicts between industrial uses and public access to the waterfront.	
Port's largest revenue streams are shipped commodities that experience market volatility in supply, demand, and price.	Refers to market volatility.
Potential natural disasters and need for resiliency planning.	Potential for large scale earthquake and volcanic eruptions.

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Local appreciation for the community development value of the Terminal 1 investment, but little if any recognition to the Port.	
Tribal relationships should be improved.	Especially timely because of Columbia River Treaty renegotiations.
Unpredictability in State funding.	State is becoming less of a reliable partner.
Shifting waste water regulations.	
City of Vancouver surcharge on industrial space.	
Cyber security & technology disruption.	This is an international and national growing threat.
Airport flight restrictions that may impact surface development.	
OPPORTUNITIES	
Improve relations with local governments.	
Ability to invest financially over the long term.	Port has capacity to be more patient in seeking return on investment than private parties.
Seek opportunities for partnerships (economic development agencies; private developers; utility agencies; tribes).	
Promote the Port's overall impact on the local economy.	An emphasis on Terminal 1, existing tenants, special events, social media; focus on higher impact economic development projects.
Promote and openly value existing tenants.	Note: Most economic growth is driven by expansion in existing businesses. There are some estimates that 80% of new job creation is local expansion.
Consider partnering with private sector to jointly develop real estate on speculative basis (prior to identified tenant under contract).	
Improve Tribal-Port collaboration.	
Cargo initiative: Expand global marketing.	

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Cargo initiative: Port act as convener for solutions to regional cargo mobility challenges.	
County wide focus.	
Seek opportunities to develop industrial real estate in northern part of Port District (North District) with access to existing short line rail.	Balanced by concern for expansion before infill complete, and expansion of the district boundaries.
Fund more community grants.	
Open for business initiative: Business incubator.	
Open for business initiative: Pre-permitting projects.	Obtain entitlements and permits for properties to expedite development projects.
Create a resiliency plan.	Address environmental & economic disruptive events.
Tell the Port story more effectively.	
Diversify the Port's internal workforce.	
Participate more aggressively in the I-5 bridge challenge.	
Be aggressive in promoting the national heavy lift corridor.	
Consider new economic development projects.	Public spaces, sports complex, solar farm, cannabis market, golf course, truck stop facility, distillery.
Terminal 1 development.	
Consolidate the three port districts in Clark County.	
Focus on infill development of Port property to effective full occupancy before pursuing expansion to new areas.	T5 in particular.
Define long-term strategy and Port's critical measures of success.	How big will the Port become, and where is its strategic value best applied; tax strategy and uses.
Increase waterfront access.	
Partner more with the Port of Portland.	
Respond to changes in bulk and break-bulk cargo technologies.	
Off-site real estate development throughout district.	Beyond North District rail/development project.