

**West Linn Waterfront Community Vision Plan**  
**Comments Received for City Council Work Session**

**10.21.2025**



## Comments/Testimony for City Council Work Session – West Linn Draft Waterfront Vision Plan

**To:** Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** Russ Axelrod, Former Mayor, Planning Commissioner, and 34-yr resident of West Linn

**Date:** October 21, 2025

Mayor and Council Members,

I discovered only yesterday these continued misrepresentations of our community's waterfront vision in your meeting packet for your October 21 work session. I am likely unable to make your Tuesday meeting so I'm sending these brief written comments for the record on behalf of myself and Friends of Willamette Wetlands (FOWW).

### 1. Remove From the Vision Plan the Depiction of Housing Development in the Wetland Property Area South of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue

I was not able to stay through your October 7 work session after giving my testimony, but I was informed from a knowledgeable source shortly after, that Council appeared in agreement with the community testimony and conclusion of the Planning Commission (PC) to remove from the waterfront vision plan any reference to (or map depiction of) housing development in the wetland property area south of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

This week I thought I would see how this change was being implemented/characterized in the revised waterfront vision plan that staff prepared for Council - I listened to the tape of the remaining portion of your work session, and I briefly reviewed parts of your meeting packet from staff.

I must say I am quite shocked and dismayed to discover that housing development is still shown as the preferred land use "vision" for the property area in and along our highest valued wetlands south of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue!

The floodplain boundary was modified slightly to incorporate 1996 data, but the housing designation remains on the maps in this area. Council should/must also understand that the floodplain boundary adjustment is an entirely separate and unrelated matter to the concern for the degraded wetland function and viability that would occur if housing development were allowed in this critical wetland and buffer area south of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

I don't know how much clearer the community or the PC can be on this issue, but please, listen to your community and remove the 'potential development area' designation shown on the waterfront vision map(s) in the wetland area south of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue!

Here is the actual unanimous motion from the PC regarding this issue (quoted from the PC Hearing Tape at 2:26:15): ***"Remove references to housing development in the ponds district."*** While the PC could have used better/more specific location context/language in its motion, if you listen to the collective testimony and PC deliberation discussions, it's very clear that this matter or issue is only referring to the property involving the adjacent wetlands area south of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I also clarified for the record this understanding in my October 7 testimony to Council.

Here is how staff and their consultant incorrectly characterized/interpreted what the PC recommended at your October 7 work session: ***"Remove "in planning stages" from the medium density residential area in the Ponds District."*** In staff's modified characterization and directive to Council, housing development remains on the maps as the preferred vision for this area with only the southern boundary of the housing area adjusted slightly to coincide with the revised (1996) floodplain boundary.

**Housing development along/within West Linn's most highly valued wetland area is not the waterfront plan "Vision" the community aspires to!**

Please direct staff to correct this misrepresentation in the draft plan to properly reflect the future "vision" our community overwhelmingly desires!

**2. Clarify for the Record Council's Rights to Create a Waterfront Vision Plan Showing the Community's Preferred and/or Alternative Future Land Use(s)**

One other note of clarification worth mentioning after listening to the tape of your October 7 work session. Councilor Groner raised the possible concern/question that removing the housing designation might expose the City to being sued for "taking" of property. Council should clarify/correct for the record that establishing a long-term planning/vision document is entirely within its purview. There are many other areas in the vision plan that are different from current zoning or may conflict with current codes and rules that will require adjustment in the future; however, creating the community vision document is an entirely acceptable and appropriate long-term planning step for the City. The PC also assessed this potential taking issue and concluded it was not a concern for the City's visioning document.

The vision plan does not preclude any property owner from submitting a development application that meets the zoning and codes in effect at the time. If a property owner wishes to submit a development application for the wetland area in the future, it will be vetted under the City's zoning, codes, rules, policies and goals in effect at the time.

However, this highlights and reinforces the great need to correct our current Water Resource Protection Code (CDC Chapter 32) that I outlined in my earlier testimony. To address this matter, our community and the PC need Council to direct the City Manager to see that flaws and loopholes in our current Chapter 32 code are assessed, and revised as necessary, to reflect sound scientific knowledge and practice as well as consistency with our City's Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, and our State's Goal 5 criteria.

As I noted in previous testimony, this issue has been sitting idled on the PC docket for years because staff have not allowed them to schedule and address the matter. **I urge Council to stand up for our community vision aspirations, environmental ethics, our Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, and our State Goal 5 criteria and direct that staff immediately address these code deficiencies!**

In closing I look forward to seeing the waterfront vision plan finally revised to reflect the overwhelming interests of our community. Thank you for addressing these matters and serving our community.

Respectfully,

Russ Axelrod

## **Comments for October 21, 2025 City Council Work Session re West Linn Waterfront Vision Plan**

**To:** Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** Terence Shumaker, Former Chair, Sustainability Advisory Board

**Date:** October 21, 2025

Once again, the documents submitted by Steve Koper and Darren Wyss for the October 21 city council work session do not accurately reflect the recommendations of the September 17 Planning Commission public hearing. The second recommendation by the PC was "Remove reference to housing development in the Ponds District."

While this is clear and to the point, it seems that the Planning Department is having problems reflecting this recommendation on the Waterfront Vision Plan maps. On page 36 of the plan, the specific area in question just south of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., that was specified by public testimony on September 17, is still shown in the map as "Potential Development Area" in the map legend.

This is baffling because it is in direct conflict with the recommendation to "Remove reference to housing development in the Ponds District." By relabeling the area south of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. as "Potential Development Area," the Planning Department is obviously trying to leave the door open for development.

My question is why is the Planning Department still trying to label the area in question as being ok for development when the Planning Commission recommended just the opposite? Why is this recommendation so hard to understand and hence reflect on the map?

My feeling is that rather than being a community vision based on community input, this project is more of a "consultation" by the Planning Department, because there are other issues and dealings in the background that we are not aware of.

Regardless of what may be going on with the Planning Department and property owner Bob Schultz, the recommendations by the Planning Commission are clear. And before any further advancement of the Vision Plan takes place, the plan documents must be updated to reflect the recommendations, and all reference to potential development must be removed from the map on p. 36 of the Vision Plan. Additionally, in my testimony at the October 7<sup>th</sup> CC work session, I stated that the proposed Resolution 2025-13, contained an inaccurate "Whereas" statement. That being the 8<sup>th</sup> "Whereas" statement which said "the West Linn Planning Commission held a public hearing on September 17, 2025 and recommended adoption of the West Linn Waterfront Plan..."

Once again, this is an inaccurate statement, because the adoption of the plan was qualified by the recommendations of the PC based on public input. This document should also be changed to reflect the PC recommendations.

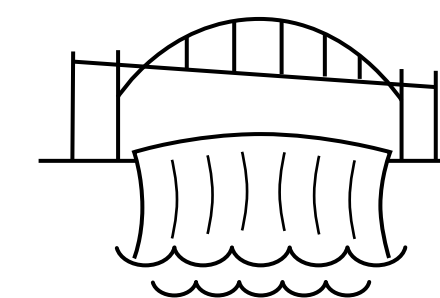
It is unfortunate that the Planning Department continues to obfuscate both the will of the community and the recommendations of the Planning Commission. Before any action on the Vision Plan by the City Council occurs, the aforementioned changes should be made to the relevant documents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully, Terence Shumaker



# Proposal to include *some* adaptive reuse and architecture preservation in the Waterfront Vision Plan



**Advocates for  
Willamette Falls  
Heritage**



# What we have





# What we have





# What we have





## What we have

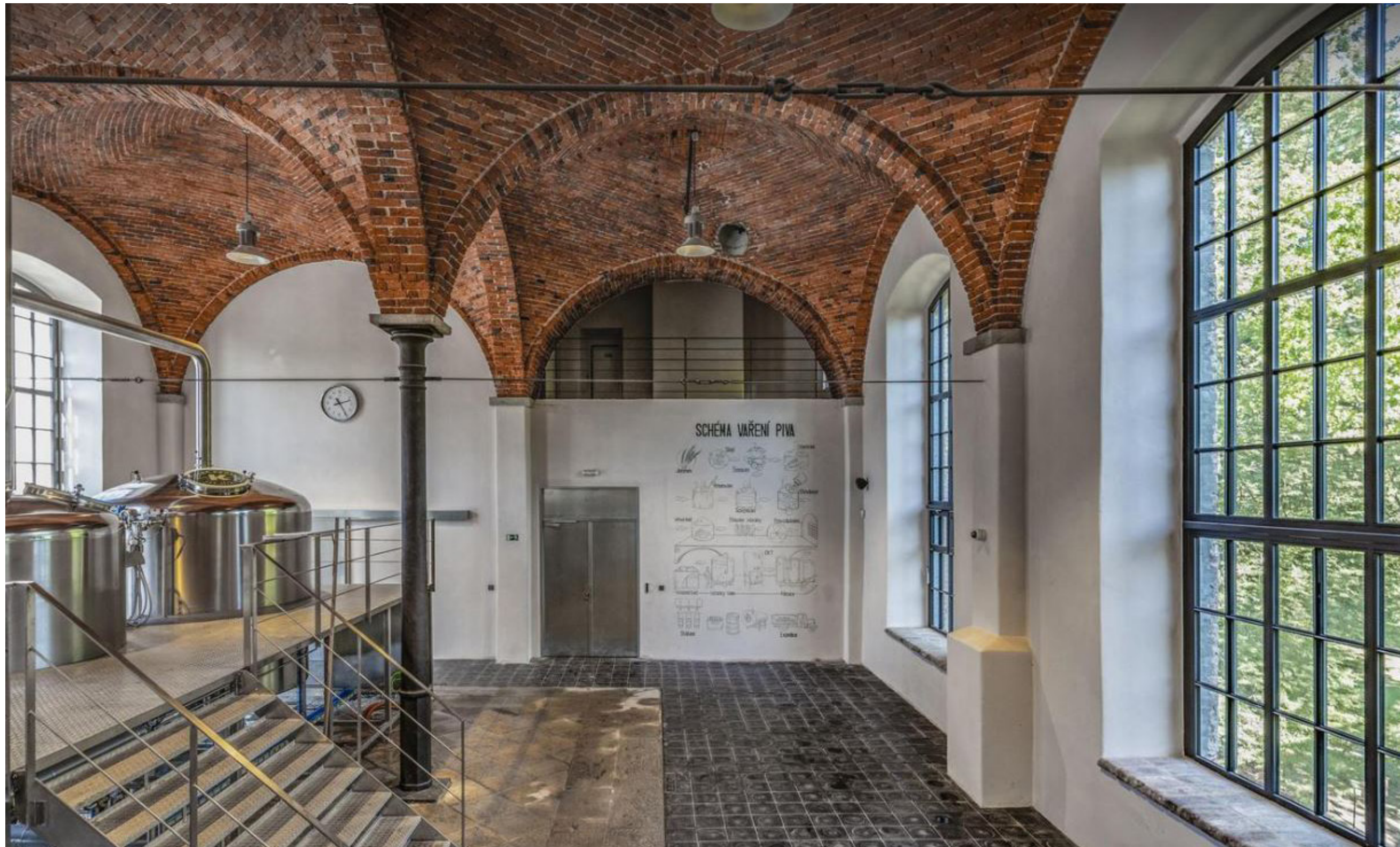


## What we could have



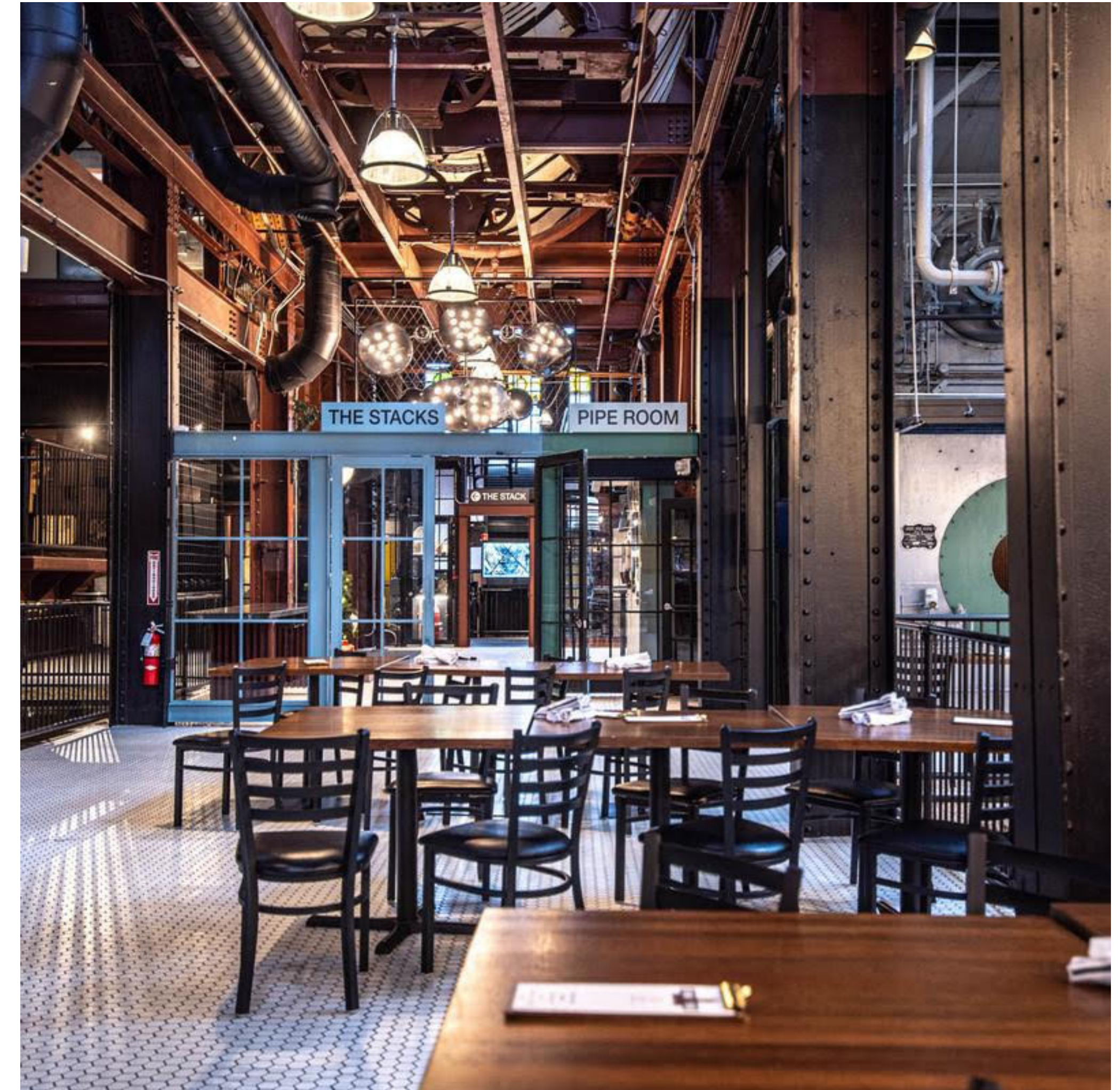


# What we could have





# What we could have





## What we're asking for



\*\* Strongly encourage or incentivize an “**Adaptive Reuse**” approach that turns some of the imbedded energy and strong visual historic elements in the existing built environment of Moore’s Island to new future uses