

Visitors applaud Chinese Garden

By Patrick Webb

The Daily Astorian | Posted: Monday, November 18, 2013 9:53 am

The skies were gray and the drizzling rain was chilling, but the smile on Suenn Ho's face was enough to warm all of Astoria.

The designer of the Garden of Surging Waves was happy to show off her project Friday afternoon. Visiting architectural students from China, appeared delighted with both the design and the fact that Astoria was commemorating its Chinese ancestors.

"It is very impressive," said Yang Kai, of Shanghai, one of the students, who visited Astoria on a break from an exchange program with the University of Oregon.

"They seem to appreciate it," said Mayor Willis Van Dusen, who was on hand to greet the students.

The Garden is a tribute to the Chinese who were instrumental in Astoria's development, building the jetties and the railroad, and working in the canneries. Their contribution was ignored for decades and the Chinese were insulted and targets of racism.

Ho translated as the visitors asked practical questions of City Manager Paul Benoit and Brett Estes, the city's director of community development.

She also took the visitors on a tour of the component parts of the Chinese Garden, which is targeted for near-completion in a couple of weeks. Two parts, prisms for the donor screen and a lantern for the pavilion, will be added later.

"I always work hard for my clients, but I have never worked with a client who is so respectful about the design process, and allowed me to have so much ability to play such a big role" Ho said.

"This project is a very important project, and for the city and the community to trust me to be able to make the most of this is unique. The sense of responsibility is tremendous."

The Garden is located in downtown Astoria opposite Astoria City Hall and the Columbia Bank branch at the intersection of 11th and Duane streets. The contract is \$1.39 million. It is the city's Bicentennial Legacy Gift.

Ho said the central location in downtown Astoria and the openness of the Chinese Garden are distinctive. "It's free and available for everybody. It's basically an open museum that shows the city's commitment to history."

She was not the only person beaming. Kelvin Brown-Wong, chairman of the Chinese Garden Committee, was among those checking out the design. “I am hoping to bring my family to see this when it is all done,” he said.

Reporter Chelsea Gorrow contributed to this story.