

## About the Linnton Photovoice Project

Photovoice is a participatory grassroots tool that incorporates photography and social action. Residents in the Linnton community have come together to use photography and stories as a way to assess, investigate, and act on concerns that impact health and wellness and potential solutions to improve quality of life.

The Portland neighborhood of Linnton borders the Portland Harbor Superfund site and is relatively isolated from the rest of Portland. Years of industrial development and the 1960's highway 30 expansion have resulted in multiple environmental concerns, poor infrastructure, and the loss of local businesses, community jobs, key community services, and social cohesion. The Linnton neighborhood's values are just as profound as their concerns. Linnton sits between the Willamette River and Forest Park and is just three miles from the wildlife refuge of Sauvie Island. Linnton is a natural sanctuary for people who appreciate a strong sense of place and conserving wildlife and the natural environment.

The Linnton community is proud of its neighborhood involvement and Linnton residents are active in promoting the revitalization of their community to bring forth a place that harbors connectivity, a sense of community, and health. This Photovoice project is a collection of photos and stories done by Linnton residents to showcase their values and concerns to promote revitalization of their community.



\*Historical photographs of Linnton were provided by the Oregon Historical Society, <http://www.ohs.o>

## History of Linnton by Rob Lee, Linnton Resident

Linnton was founded in 1843 on dreams of being the deep water port of Northern Oregon, and was where the Conestoga wagons disembarked after floating the Columbia. Instead of becoming a destination, the tiny settlement languished for the next sixty years—tents, a dairy farm, orchards, an occasional rough building—on the narrow strip of marshy flood plain. Swept into the industrial boom at the opening of the 20th Century, Linnton opened its first sawmill in 1904, and had four more, with sailing ships tied at their docks, by 1911, a ship builder shouldering up between them. Five oil companies and a natural gas facility were strung along the Willamette like steel pearls by 1914. The town's population had grown in those ten years from 400 to 2000. Enclaves of different immigrant nationalities clustered in the company housing along the railroad tracks and in homes perched on the hillside. It was a hard working, hard drinking place remote from Portland, which is the city it was annexed into in 1915.

The rapid growth and prosperity from 1905 to 1929 was stymied by the Great Depression. The river-wide rafts of logs that fed the mills dwindled as the great lowland Douglas fir forests of Oregon were decimated. Linnton was reduced to one mill by 1950. By the early '60's, Linnton's once thriving downtown was known principally as a "bottleneck," an impediment to traffic on an important highway. The thoroughfare was widened and razed most of Linnton's downtown, the community sundered by traffic speeding through at 55 mph, the hubs for meeting—food stores, coffee shops, barbers, peopled sidewalks—gone or withering. Since then Linnton's many efforts at revitalizing some semblance of a public center have been entirely frustrated. Interestingly, the community is now finding hope in the renewal of brown fields, and the restoration of streams and vegetation to an approximation of what they were 170 years ago.

LINNTON  
COMMUNITY  
CONCERNS

*A photographic representation*

*"Y'know where Linnton is?" My first question when I'm directing a friend from the eastside to my house. The answer generally is something like, "not really." Next Question, "Do you know where Sauvie Island is?" The answer almost always is affirmative. I refrain from saying, "How can you NOT know where Linnton is. We're by the river, we have wildlife, great views, and you pass us every time you go to Sauvie Island." When Linnton has a riverside park that is a destination for people who enjoy healthy outdoor recreation, I won't be asking, "Do you know where Linnton is?" I look forward to that.*

*Shawn Looney, Linnton resident*





*“What’s in our air?”* Darise Weller, Linnton resident



### *The Toxic Air Race*

*“In Linnton there's a race between "For Sale" signs and tombstones.”*

Jan Secunda, Linnton Resident

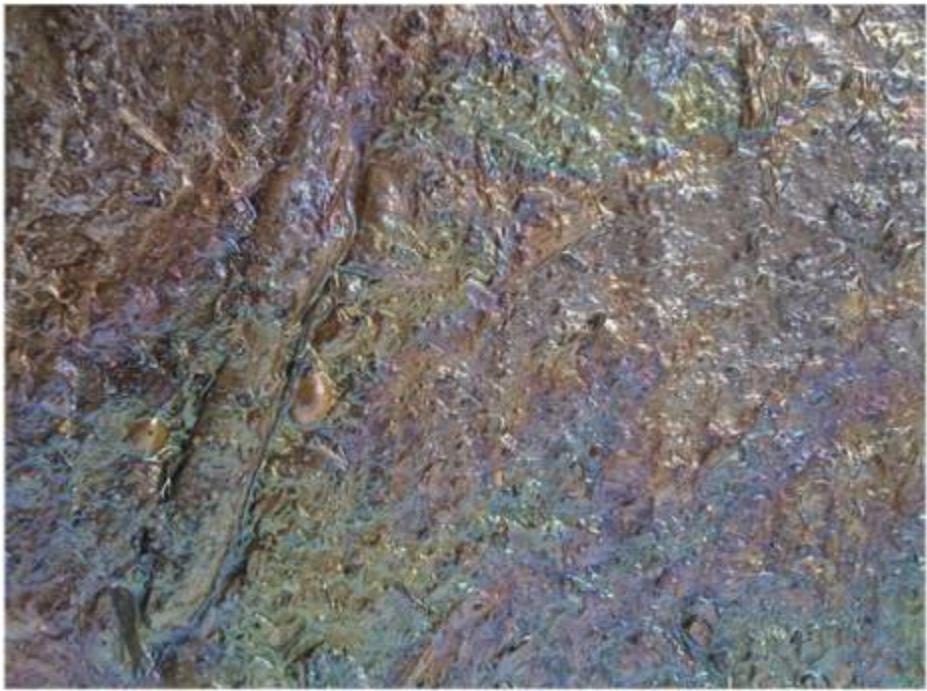


*“If and when we can walk on the beach, and when the river can be enjoyed by all - the work to clean it up may be back breaking work! I look forward to that day! Will you?”*

Dan Dishongh, Linnton resident



*"Is there going to be an access to the river at the end of this "Rainbow" for the Linnton Community?"*  
Dan Dishongh, Linnton resident



Daniel Faccinetti, site director of the Linnton Community Center



***“NO PLACE TO WALK.”*** Darise Weller, Linnton resident



*“A large gasoline tank afire, according to the oil industry, would kill 50% of the people within 300 feet in the first 30 seconds. A person 695 feet away would receive 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns on any skin exposed for 60 seconds. The tank would burn for 15 hours.”*

Rob Lee, Linnton resident



*“He was a tall, gawky kid, maybe twenty, living in the cement hulk of the old substation above the highway. The woman in the car was text messaging. When I cross the highway, I often feel phantom cars hurtling through me, like a breeze.”*

Rob Lee, Linnton resident



*“Out Fall #6 runs under the Mill buildings and parking lots and comes out at the rivers edge to travel the last few feet past by old broken off pilings of the old wooden dock of the mill.”*

Dan Dishongh, Linnton resident



*“Some items that you can find on the beach when the river is low. History comes into view. People have even found arrow heads and other signs of life have been found in the area of the Linnton beach over the years, what will you find?”*

Dan Dishongh, Linnton resident



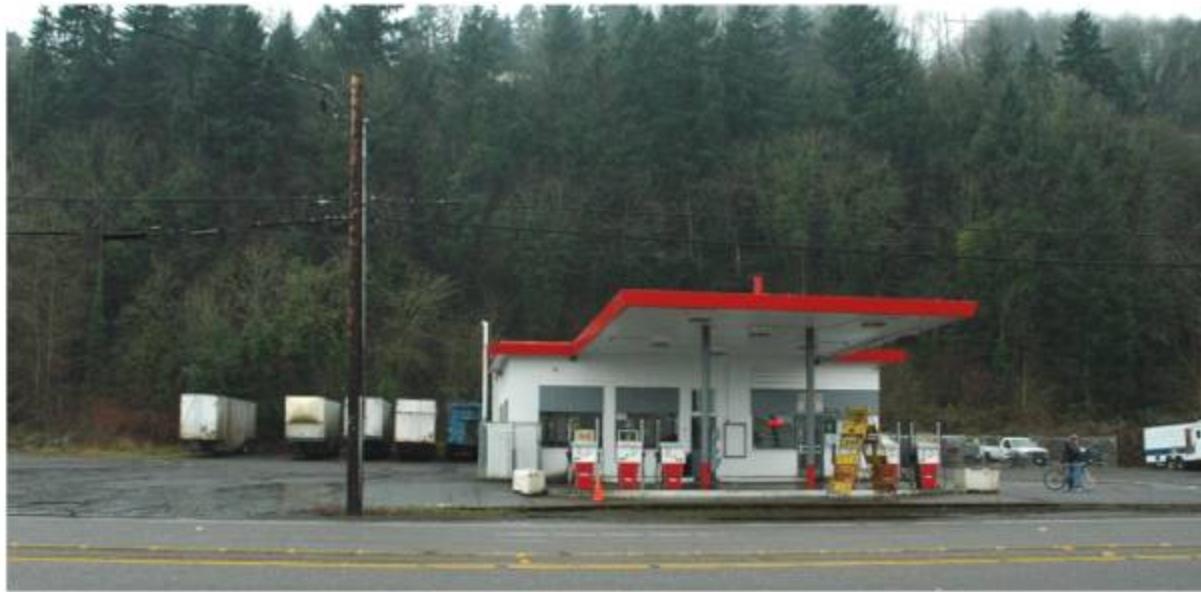
*“Linnton needs places for herons.”* Edward Jones, Linnton resident



### *It Just Needs to Stop*

*“Our friend and colleague, Terrie (in the red coat), was diagnosed with lung cancer shortly after this Linnton Toxic Tour. After she died, I used to carry a vial of ashes in my pocket whenever we met with the polluters. They justify their unnecessary poisoning of the air by saying that they “provide living wage jobs” as if there is no better way to support the economy than to kill people. They provide more jobs than they admit to because they fail to include the oncologists and other health care providers as well as the staff at the crematoriums. How can we forgive this ongoing insult? How? It just needs to stop.”*

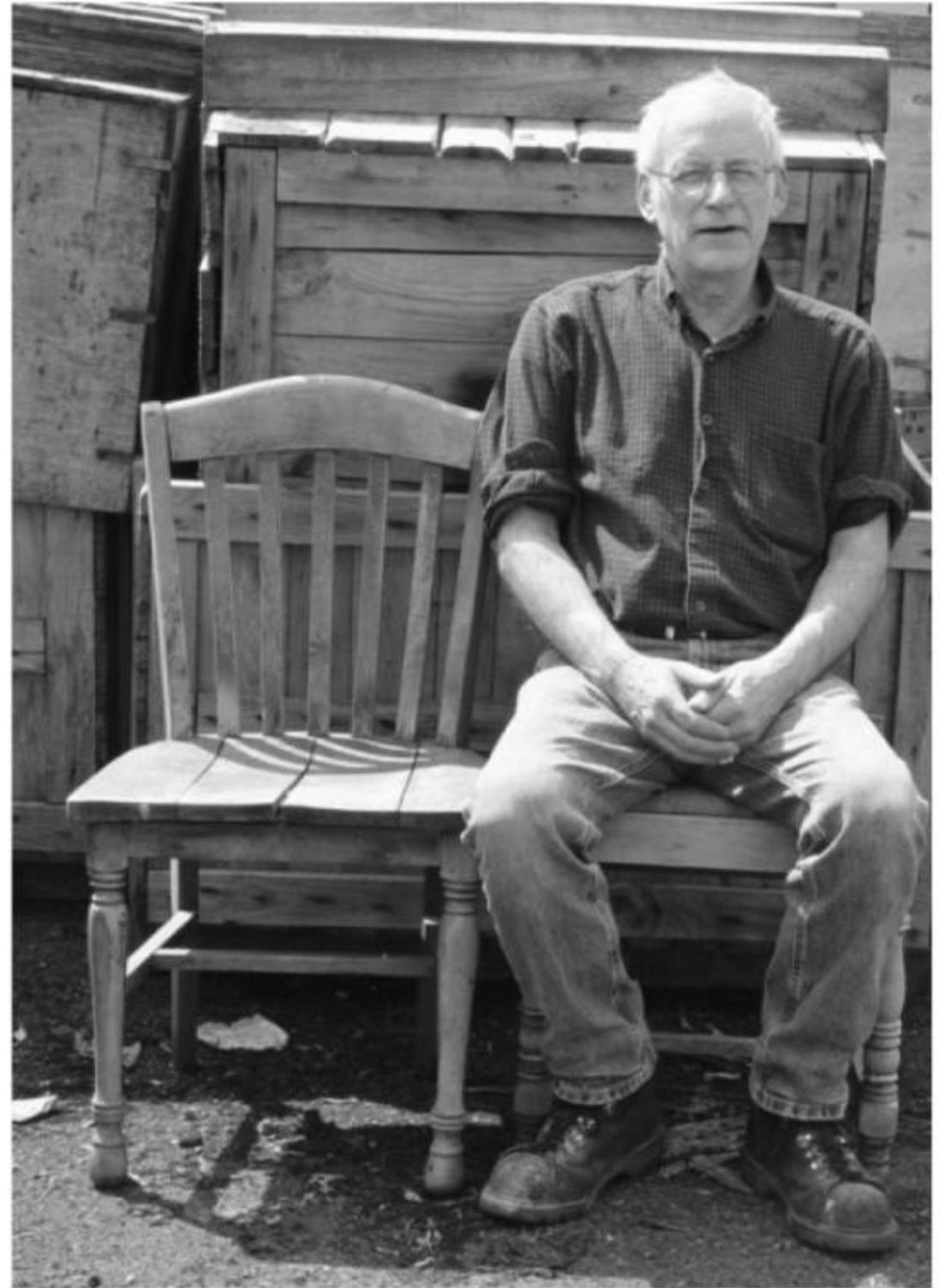
Jan Secunda, Linnton resident



*Albert Einstein once said, “the significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them.” Revitalizing Linnton in a way that promotes community health and well-being will require a different way of thinking—different from the thinking that created the environmental concerns in Linnton today—and will require listening to the needs of those that reside there. One thought could be to revitalize and re-use the vacant and underutilized land in Linnton into healthy, viable community spaces that can serve a purpose for Linnton and other nearby neighborhoods. Dawn Hanson, Oregon Health Authority*

LINNTON  
COMMUNITY  
RESILLENCY  
AND  
STRENGTHS

*A photographic representation*



*“We've lived half our married life in Linnton so we've become increasingly self-reliant, funny how that has brought us closer together.”*  
Jan Secunda, Linnton resident.



*"Whenever it snows, I head up into the park to see the woods etched white."*

Rob Lee, Linnton resident



*“The Mill buildings, Community Center and the Linnton Community have been a place where producers have come to make TV series, movies and even commercials over the past eleven years. TV series "Leverage" in 2009, movies like "Every Mans War" in 2007, "Paranoia Park" in 2008 and just last year there a "Danner Boot Commercial", was filmed. They turned a small part of the mill into a burning cave.”*

Dan Dishongh, Linnton resident

## *Rogue Fir of Shadow Ravine*

*When the region's most  
prolific lumber mills  
were less than a mile  
away, you stood guard  
for Shadow Ravine,  
and saved the trees,  
where fog has a winter  
home.*

*Tell me, how do I turn  
back the woodcutters  
who come to make my  
heart bare?*

*Mike Aspros,  
Linnton resident*





### *Day of Stewardship*

*Snow, plump as berries, melts in my cup, as the last bitter drop of coffee warms my throat. And then a whirl of shrubs and shovels as we begin working the forest floor.*

*Crunching through decaying bramble and under knocking alders, I struggle to hold my cedar saplings with fingers numb from frost.*

*“They need a soft spot,” I say and thrust my Trailbreaker into the frozen dirt.*

Mike Aspros, Linnton resident



*Forest Park in frosted light*

*Fir trunks with limbs like tusks  
press against its blurry edge.  
Drifting fog brews mint in the  
air.*

*Rain drops echo and pop against  
the leaves. Some fall short of the  
forest floor to burn the back of  
my neck.*

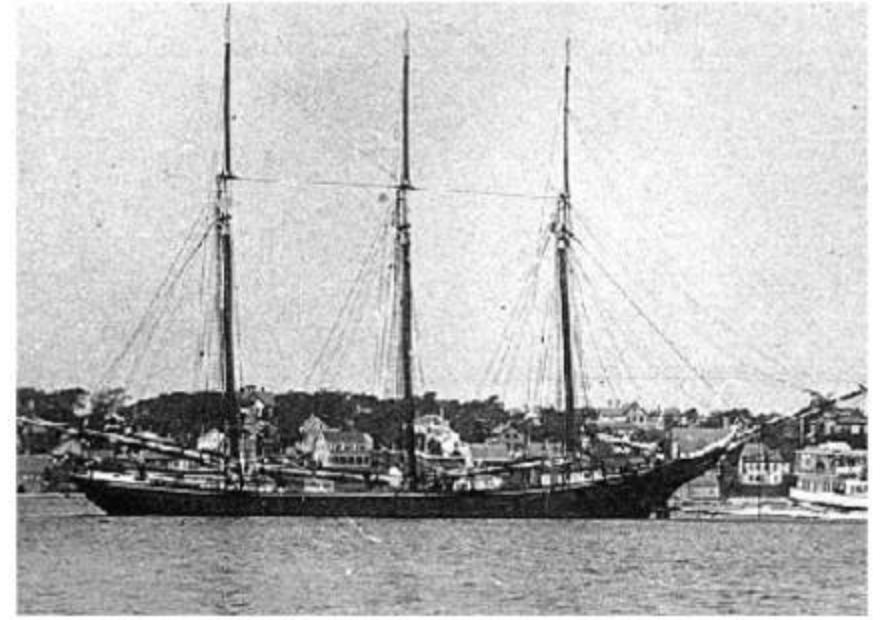
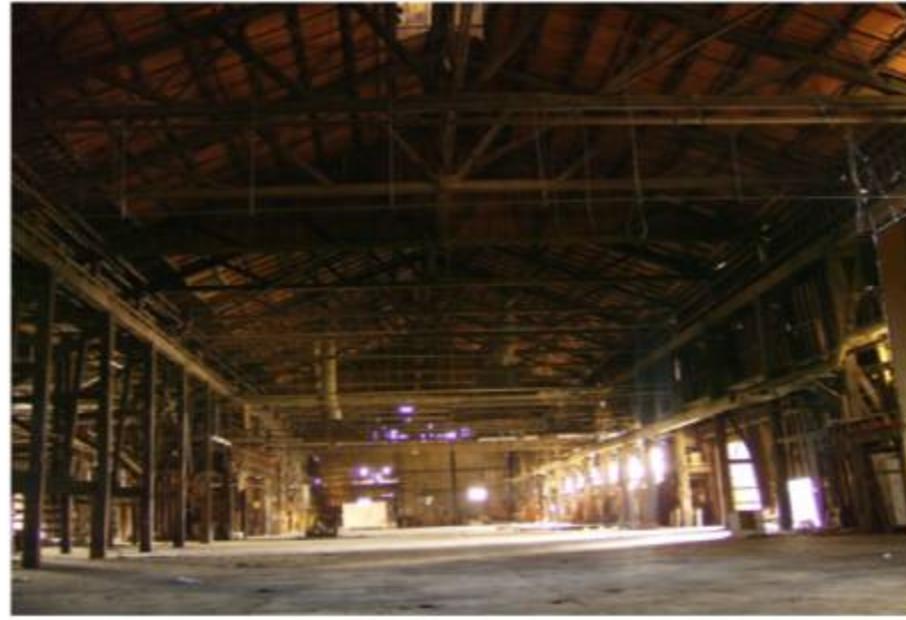
*What we're told:  
The world promises a flurry edge.*

*Light rain, tapping leaves,  
says a good thing:  
Go here.*

*Mike Aspros, Linnton  
resident*

## Interior of the former Linnton Plywood Mill

*"The main bay is a view of Oregon's second largest wood building. Before the floor and roof were in place, schooners of the type in the photo, "Linton Type Schooner," were built and launched here.*



*The peeler rack shows the sap from the wood just off the lathe.*



*The river side hoist way illustrates the lifting equipment used by the crew.*



*The interior upper structure lets you see the super structure supporting the huge roof."*



John Shaw, Linnton  
resident

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) received a grant from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to work in partnership with the Linnton neighborhood, businesses, organizations and agencies who serve the neighborhood.

The focused on the identification of brownfields and ways to improve health in the Linnton neighborhood through redevelopment and land reuse. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines brownfields as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." The reuse of brownfields improves the environment, improves the livability and health of neighborhoods and regions, and decreases development pressures on unused land or "greenspace."

OHA facilitated a series of meetings from December 2010 through June 2011 with Linnton residents, businesses and stakeholder partners. Together, community health concerns and strengths were identified. The community developed a plan to monitor health over time as potential brownfield redevelopment or reuse efforts take place.

Several outcomes evolved from the series of meetings and collaborative efforts. This Photovoice project was one of them. Linnton residents and OHA staff developed this project from January to September of 2011. A kickoff for the Photovoice exhibit was held at the former Linnton Plywood Mill site (a brownfield of great interest to the community) on September 15, 2011.

The community's intent with the photovoice project is to raise awareness among local decision-makers on the environmental health concerns and the community strengths of Linnton; to be able to promote decisions that create a more livable, viable and healthful Linnton community.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO – Linnton residents, the Linnton Neighborhood Association, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and Gunderson, LLC. The project was funded by Gunderson, LLC and by a portion of a grant awarded to the OHA by the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a federal public health agency.

Also a special thanks to the Linnton Plywood Mill site for hosting the Linnton Photovoice exhibit kickoff and to Jimmy Stahley, manager of the Plywood Mill site, for his assistance with organizing the event.

