

# CRUISE TERMINALS



**Big-ship ready**

## Cruise terminal planning

By Darryl Anderson  
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The World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure (PIANC) notes that ports that already welcome cruise traffic must continually adapt their infrastructure to meet cruise lines' needs. It is essential for port infrastructure to be planned carefully and to include appropriate facilities for present and future requirements. This article will explore how cruise industry leaders are positioning their organization to be big-ship ready.

### Industry trends and initiatives

From a global perspective, one of the most critical factors influencing new cruise port planning and existing terminal redevelopment is the trend towards ever-larger cruise vessels. PIANC reports that over the last 15 years, the average capacity of cruise ships has grown by 138 per cent to 3,100 passengers, while average vessel length has increased by 50 per cent, up to 300 metres. Also, ships with a capacity for over 5,000 passengers are becoming more and more common.

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In response, the PIANC unveiled its first *Guidelines for Cruise Terminals* in 2016. The guide includes all areas of cruise ship operations: elements on the maritime side, the wharf-side services area (apron), terminal building and land transport area. It also includes guidelines on security, financial and operational aspects. The guide sets out the various criteria to be defined before designing the maritime part of cruise terminals, for example, the characteristics of the ships that the port expects to receive, approach and berthing manoeuvres, mooring and defence systems and the type of protection against erosion of propellers, among other details.

### Seattle

The Port of Seattle's Michael McLaughlin, Director, Cruise and Mari-

time Operations indicated that planning for larger ships in his port commenced with an unprecedented partnership with a major cruise line.

A very important milestone was reached in 2015 when the Port signed a 15-year lease/investment agreement with Norwegian Cruise Line. The agreement calls for the expansion and modernization of Terminal 66. McLaughlin noted that the Port and NCL are each investing US\$15 million on upgrades that give Norwegian's ships priority, though not exclusive use of facilities.

The redevelopment includes:

- Expansion of the existing 43,000-square-foot facility to 150,000 square feet.
- New VIP passenger lounge.
- A new custom-designed baggage-handling conveyor system capable of



*The Port of Seattle's Pier 66, soon to be expanded and modernized.*

*Photo courtesy Port of Seattle*



Image courtesy GVHA

*An extensive remodelling of Ogden Point will allow Victoria to welcome and accommodate ever larger vessels.*



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As the winner of Cruise Critic ‘Best North American Homeport – 2016,’ the Port of Seattle has a well-earned reputation riding on a successful redevelopment project. Not shying away from the challenges, McLaughlin indicated that the Port applied some very important planning principles to the project. One of those principles, agreed to by both the Port and NCL, was that they did not need to construct a building with fancy features when the efficient movement of people to and from the ship was a priority at this single berth facility intended to handle very large ships.

Another important planning insight applied was to extend collaboration to some of the smaller details involved in the redevelopment project. This includes relocating some existing tenants, finding ways to use space as efficiently as possible which led to the solution for the baggage handling system, and working with the City of Seattle on street and sidewalk improvements to enhance pedestrian and truck access.

### Victoria

Making Ogden Point Terminal big-ship ready is a twofold process for the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA). The first challenge is to keep Canada’s busiest cruise port-of-call fully functional in response to the needs of

current customers and, secondly, position the site for long-term sustainable growth.

To help address the first challenge, John Briant, Western Stevedoring’s General Manager at Ogden Point, was recently in Florida to do a virtual test of a proposed dolphin mooring extension on the pier. The simulation, conducted with Norwegian Cruise Line, proved that an extension would allow for longer ships to berth at Ogden Point, in time for the inaugural call in June 2018 of the 330-metre *Norwegian Bliss*. The ship will carry up to 4,000-plus passengers between Seattle and Alaska, and will make regular calls in Victoria throughout the 2018 season.

The GVHA has been undertaking extensive work on the Ogden Point Master Plan to position the site for the long term. Mark Crisp, Director of Properties, stated “a key planning principle deployed by the GVHA is recognizing that a successful development strategy requires three components: First, what is needed and viable over a given time; second, the Plan — a detailed layout and supporting details and controls for the property and third, implementation — including the proposed development timetable for the property. This provides a much higher level of certainty to internal and external stakeholders.

The final draft of the Master Plan that was released in December 2016, provided a cohesive and detailed plan for a vision and roadmap for site redevelopment areas that prioritizes cruise, aviation/marine, commercial/institutional/retail and amenity opportunities for use of the property. Crisp noted that GVHA’s commitment to ongoing consultation with GVHA partners, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, combined with

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a robust market assessment of opportunities, established the priorities for the next few decades.

Subsequently, in planning best practices during the creation of the Master Plan, GVHA and consulting company Stantec developed an adaptable engagement plan built on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) framework and structured to engage with well-informed members of the public, communicating regularly and factually. With municipalities increasingly relying on public consultation as a key part of decision making, this approach is critical in working with communities that are affected by a Port's activities — either directly or indirectly — and ultimately managing expectation. This, combined with creating a long-term development and technical plan that was accessible and understandable at many levels, has provided opportunities for insight from outside the industry which has helped shape the Master Plan as both an instrument for marine development and an outreach tool to the community at large.

## Nanaimo

The Port of Nanaimo made a significant commitment to be big-ship ready by building a \$24 million, state-of-the-art Welcome Centre and cruise berth. Opened on May 6, 2011, the facility has since welcomed guests from Princess, Norwegian, Celebrity, Royal Caribbean, Silver Seas and Crystal Cruise Lines as well as several smaller pocket cruisers.

The marine infrastructure is built to accommodate the largest vessels on the West Coast of the Americas, proven with calls in 2014 by the *Celebrity Solstice* and RCL's *Explorer of the Seas* in 2016.

Bernie Dumas, President and CEO of the Nanaimo Port Authority, stated, "the facility has been operationally very well received." Dumas credits this positive industry reaction in part because the planning process involved representatives from BC Coast Pilots Ltd., Pacific Pilotage Authority and cruise line executives involved in simulator modelling trials in Florida.

Another reason for the smooth operation of the cruise facility was a decision

by Dumas to combine the engineering strengths of CH2M with PND Engineers, Inc. from Seattle. PND's proprietary "SPIN FINT™ piles" on the 350-foot floating pontoon allowed the project to be completed more cost effectively.

The application of sound planning principles means that cruise lines experience a fast passenger disembarkation process, assisted by golf cart shuttles and complete handicap accessibility. Cruise tourists have the freedom to come and go quickly to awaiting tour buses for the Central Vancouver Island Region and city shuttles after clearing customs in the Welcome Centre.

Reflecting on the insight gleaned from a successful launch of the cruise terminal, Dumas noted that it takes time and community collaboration to secure the interests of the cruise lines — a task made harder by the fact that the cruise terminal opened just as the full impact and implications of the 2008 U.S. economic crisis was being played out.

With an extensive background in sales and marketing, Dumas has a thorough understanding of changing economic conditions that can lead to new opportunities. Collaborative efforts with the Snuneymuxw First Nation and BC Parks to develop an Aboriginal tourism experience on Newcastle Island in the heart of Nanaimo harbour is one such initiative that could benefit cruise tourism.

## Conclusion

Before the *Explorer of the Seas* made its inaugural calls to Victoria and Nanaimo in 2016, industry observers questioned whether B.C. ports were big-ship ready — and they were. Once Norwegian sails their new vessel, the *Norwegian Bliss*, into Seattle and Victoria in 2018, it will be another very public display of the new large-ship era.

The evidence from this article suggests that leaders in the cruise industry are up to the challenge of being big-ship ready while simultaneously adapting to the cruise itinerary innovations and community engagement.

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