

The Campus  
at Fort Worden State Park  
*A Lifelong Learning Center amidst Historical Buildings, Beaches, Campgrounds, Trails*

**“New ideas require old buildings.”**

— *Urban historian Jane Jacobs*

Fort Worden’s 435 acres, operated for decades as a Washington State Park, include some 100 whitewashed buildings built at the turn of the century. The built Campus of the fort is a National Historic Landmark with performance halls, meeting rooms, classrooms, a dining hall, guest houses and dormitories. The Campus is outlined by a broad parade ground, walkways, winding roads and rows of stately maples. The Campus is surrounded by the rest of the park – broad beaches that reach past the Point Wilson Lighthouse into Admiralty Inlet, densely forested highlands laced by trails and historical embattlements, picnic areas and full-service campgrounds. The park itself is at the edge of Victorian Port Townsend, and at the foot of the vast Olympic National Park.

Over the past five years, a bold collaboration between the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, local government and Centrum, a renowned cultural organization, has created a long-term plan for the future for Fort Worden. Led by a local public corporation called the Public Development Authority, Fort Worden would be weaned from tax support and become self-sustaining. In keeping with a Lifelong Learning Center vision, the current 15 partner organizations operating on the Campus would be enhanced, and new partners would be sought to fill in empty spaces and to launch new educational enterprises.

All partners, existing and new, would be devoted to improving lives through artistic, cultural, wellness, culinary, educational, recreational and trades-oriented programs. Revenues raised would support the facilities and the traditional campgrounds, beaches and trails that have been open to the local and visiting public for generations. The PDA would sustain public access.

This new vision for Fort Worden has become especially important given the serious financial problems faced by Washington State Parks. All parks face cutbacks; many face closure. Fort Worden’s public-private partnership model holds promise as a way of sustaining and improving Fort Worden. The PDA, created by the City of Port Townsend, is charged with implementing the long-term plan for the Fort by preserving the Fort’s unique historical and recreational resources, and developing the Lifelong Learning Center. One example: the renovation of a little-used barracks, Building 202, into a permanent college center.

Fort Worden will remain a park, always open to campers, hikers, kayakers and beachwalkers. The renovated Campus will be infused with new privately and publicly funded programs devoted to inspirational and transformative learning for people of all ages.

*The Campus at Fort Worden: A gathering place for life-changing experiences*