

Press release**November 6, 2014****Contact:****Christina Robertson-Gardiner, Planner**crobertson@orc.org (503) 496-1564**City Commission Unanimously Adopts Master Plan for the Willamette Falls Legacy Project**

Last night the Oregon City Commission voted to approve the rezoning and Master Plan for the former Blue Heron Paper Mill.

For the first time in 150 years, Oregonians will have the opportunity to rediscover a cultural and scenic treasure: Willamette Falls. A public vision and master plan will help transform a 23-acre industrial site nestled along the falls in historic Oregon City.

The Blue Heron site is located stunningly at Willamette Falls and is historically significant as the founding place of Oregon. The site also presents significant challenges to attracting private investment. A combination of market conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and challenging site conditions add complexity to private development. The approach taken in the Master Plan balances these complexities and creates a development program and vision that aims high and provides flexibility for market implementation.

The Framework Master Plan solidifies the community's vision and clears barriers to redevelopment. Under the plan, the 22-acre site will be rezoned for a vibrant mix of shops, restaurants, offices and housing. A network of walk and bike-friendly streets would link the new district with the rest of downtown Oregon City. The plan gives the new owner flexibility to build everything from hotels to housing, museums to markets, offices to light industrial buildings. But some things aren't negotiable: Developers will have to reflect and respect the site's natural setting and industrial history. Make it easy to walk and bike. Blend in with downtown Oregon City, and create a unique sense of place in the new waterfront district. Preserve key historic structures when feasible – and, when it's not, incorporate artifacts into the design. Promote healthy habitat along the Willamette River and build something that will last.

With this vote, Oregonians move another step closer to realizing the vision for public access to Willamette Falls. The Legacy Partners—Metro, Oregon City, Clackamas County and the State of Oregon—are committed to continuing the momentum created last year. They are currently working to obtain easements on the site along the Willamette River and will soon issue a Request for Proposals to select a team to design a world-class Riverwalk.

Be ready in 2015 to help us tackle these questions: What will this Riverwalk look like? What do you want to be able to see and do on the Riverwalk? How can the Riverwalk share the current stories and history of Native Americans, the Missoula Floods, the End of the Oregon Trail, the birthplace of Oregon, and the rise of the industrial West? How can the Riverwalk be designed to enhance habitat along the Willamette River? We will need your help to answer these questions and more - get ready to put your thinking caps on!