



City of Oregon City

625 Center Street
Oregon City, OR 97045
503-657-0891

Staff Report

File Number: 18-085

Agenda Date: 2/7/2018

Status: Agenda Ready

To: City Commission

Agenda #: 7a.

From: Community Services Director Phil Lewis

File Type: Report

SUBJECT:

Resolution No. 18-04, Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan Adoption

RECOMMENDED ACTION (Motion):

Staff recommend City Commission adopt Resolution No. 18-04 for the Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Willamette Falls is one of the nation's most beautiful and historic natural wonders and is the second largest waterfall by volume in North America. It has long been an important cultural and gathering place for Native American Tribes. Industrial development, beginning in the 1830s, blocked the falls from access and greatly modified the riverbank with manmade industrial structures. With the closure of the Blue Heron Paper Company in February of 2011, the opportunity arose to bring public access to the east bank of Willamette Falls for the first time in over 150 years.

The Willamette Falls riverwalk site is located on the 22-acre former Blue Heron Mill property in downtown Oregon City via an easement that was donated to Metro by the private property owner. The main portion of the site is largely defined by heavy industrial use and is currently occupied by old paper mill structures and remnants of buildings from earlier industrial eras of wool and flour processing layered upon each other and interwoven into a highly complex assembly.

After the Blue Heron mill closed in 2011 the four partner agencies - Oregon City, Clackamas County, Metro and the State of Oregon, came together as the Willamette Falls Legacy Project, to secure public access to the falls. In 2012, the Partners identified four core values in order to bring the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to life. The four values are Historic and Cultural Interpretation, Public Access, Healthy Habitat and Economic Redevelopment. The values have been used as a framework for all project decisions and will continue to guide future decisions as the project is implemented. In 2014, the Framework Master Plan was created to guide future development of the site.

From the winter of 2015 to present, project staff have been involved with the riverwalk planning, design and community engagement for the riverwalk. The master plan is a result of a two-year design process developed in collaboration with the City of Oregon City, Metro, Clackamas

County, the State of Oregon, PGE, Falls Legacy LLC, the five confederated tribes and thousands of community members. Other engagement included conversations with agencies to understand the complexities and science of the site, and meetings with focus groups and state partners.

Five community events and online surveys, an online Community Check-In, numerous presentations, facilitated conversations to local groups or organizations, and week day tours of the site helped shape the master plan. Stakeholders and community members weighed in on their vision for the site. Eight key uses drive the design of the public space and include PGE dam operations, falls viewing and tribal access and use.

The master plan provides a long-term vision and implementation strategy to guide future public use and development of the riverwalk. This master plan document establishes project goals and objectives, key public uses, outlines site resources and conditions, and summarizes the planning process. It also lays out a framework for implementation, including phasing, future maintenance and operational needs, and funding.

The overall riverwalk is an aspirational plan that anticipates future funding commitments, grants and fundraising efforts. It is anticipated that the design of the riverwalk will be built in phases as funding becomes available. Goals for Phase 1 include providing a prominent view of the falls, safe and secure interim access and building demolition that will prepare the site for future phases of the riverwalk and reduce barriers for redevelopment. Phase 1 will include habitat restoration work, historic and cultural interpretive elements and provide a viewing area in the Mill H building and Boiler Plant complex. The Partners intend to develop public access to the site in a sensitive and balanced way that ensures all four core values are considered now and into the future.