

## **15. WILLAMETTE RIVER GREENWAY**

This section of the Oregon City Comprehensive Plan is intended to comply with Statewide Planning Goal 15, Willamette Greenway. This goal sets forth procedures for administering the 300 miles of greenway that protects the Willamette River.

In 1973, the Willamette River Greenway (WRG) was created by the state to protect the Willamette River corridor from Eugene to the confluence with the Columbia River. The natural, scenic and recreational qualities are protected and historical sites, structures, facilities, and objects are preserved for public education and enjoyment. Local jurisdictions are required to plan for and protect uses within the WRG boundary under Statewide Planning Goal 15. Land within the WRG boundary is subject to the goals and policies in this element and the regulations in applicable implementing ordinances. Actual and timely monitoring of compliance of public and private entities with the goals and elements of the Greenway is crucial to the success of this Statewide Planning Goal.

### **Background**

The Oregon State Legislative Assembly created the Willamette River Greenway (WRG) in 1973. The Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for coordination of the development and maintenance of the Greenway Plan. The State Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) is authorized under Statewide Planning Goal 15 to determine whether local comprehensive plans satisfy the requirements of the statutes.

Goal 15 requires that each jurisdiction containing the Willamette River incorporate applicable portions of the approved DOT Greenway Plan in their comprehensive plan and implementing regulations. The Oregon City Comprehensive Plan contains goals, policies, an inventory of properties, and a WRG boundary. It implements an overlay zone that regulated allowed uses within the boundary. The WRG element further identifies properties for possible public acquisition and the conditions under which the acquisition could occur.

Land within the boundary is subject to the goals and policies in the comprehensive plan and the regulations in applicable implementing ordinances. Any change or intensification of use or development (as defined in LCDC Goal #15) proposed for land within the Greenway boundary requires a Greenway permit. Land within 150 feet of the ordinary low water mark is considered to be within the WRG Compatibility Review Boundary and is subject to a compatibility review through the conditional use process. WRG Compatibility Review ensures a balance of the best possible appearance, habitat, water quality, public access, scenic, economic, and recreational qualities are provided on lands directly abutting the Willamette River. There are no changes proposed to those processes established by the 1982 Comprehensive Plan and the zoning ordinance. Procedures for and criteria to be used in the administrative review and conditional use processes are consistent with requirements in LCDC Goal #15, and are implemented through the Willamette River Greenway Overlay District.

Additional documents adopted since 1982 that affect the Willamette River Greenway are:

- Oregon City Waterfront Master Plan (Ordinance No. 01-1033, effective January 2002)
- Downtown Community Plan (Ordinance No. 99-1034)

- Water Resources Overlay District of the City’s zoning code, which implements Title 3 of Metro’s Urban Growth Management Functional Plan.
- Flood Management Overlay District of the City’s zoning code.
- Erosion and sediment control requirements of the City’s zoning code.

A city-sanctioned “Natural Resources Committee” was established by ordinance in 2002 and should be encouraged to provide input in projects or concerns relating to the Greenway.

Oregon City’s waterfront area at the confluence of the Willamette and Clackamas rivers contains spectacular natural features and a rich history. Given the site’s unique characteristics and proximity to the heart of downtown Oregon City, revitalization of the waterfront area is key to shaping the future of the community. A Waterfront Master Plan was adopted in 2002 to guide that future. The primary focus of the Waterfront Master Plan is to balance the interplay of the natural environment with the economic potential of public and private development. The plan highlights open space improvements and mixed use redevelopment within the district, which is generally along the waterfront from 5<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown north to the Clackamas River and east along the Clackamas River to I-205.

The Downtown Community Plan establishes a framework for preserving and strengthening the historic character of Oregon City, refining the mix of land uses and emphasizing pedestrian-oriented design. The Downtown Community Plan discussion, goals, and policies are found in Chapter N of this plan.

The natural environment, and fish and wildlife habitats that have been created through human effort, surrounding the Willamette River should be preserved and protected. Protection is provided through the Water Resources Overlay District of Title 17 of the Oregon City Municipal Code and the Willamette River Greenway Overlay District. The City will review these ordinances to remove any conflicts between them and to meet the goals of the Willamette Greenway, add substance where needed. Since the 1996 flood that inundated portions of the greenway, a new flood plain section of the Natural Resources element was adopted in 1999 to better address the management of development in the flood plain.

Some of the implementing regulations that affect the WRG (Flood Management Overlay District, Water Quality Resource Area District Overlay, and Willamette River Greenway Overlay District) conflict, particularly development regulations. Adoption of the Waterfront Master Plan, the Downtown Community Plan, and the regulations to implement them has the potential to further complicate the regulations within the Greenway. Staff should ensure that development standards and regulations as they affect the Greenway, wherever they occur in the implementing ordinances do not create a conflict.

Greenway area resources, including ownership patterns, are discussed in the resource document that supports the Oregon City Comprehensive Plan.

### **Land within the WRG Compatibility Review Boundary**

Throughout the 1990s, the City acquired many of the privately owned parcels along both the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers that were discussed in the 1982 comprehensive plan. Parcels

were acquired in the late 1990s from along Clackamette Drive in the vicinity of the I-205 bridge around Clackamette Cove.

The majority of waterfront properties in the Canemah District remain in private ownership. It is important for the City to acquire and maintain open space land in Canemah to provide bike and pedestrian connections along Highway 99E to the Willamette River Trail as well as river access and view corridors. Equally important is the protection and enhancement of degraded riparian areas in the Canemah district through municipal, public service, and community planting projects.

The remaining parcels within the Willamette River Greenway that remain in private ownership are owned primarily by the Union Pacific Railroad and Blue Heron Paper Company. The railroad is an important link in the transportation system and plays a critical role in regional freight and passenger transportation (Amtrak). This transportation link must be preserved to maintain functions that significantly impact regional economics and livability.

The Blue Heron Paper Company continues to play a vital role in providing jobs in Oregon City. The existing use plays a role in enhancing the river-related economic resources (that being power and raw material for the pulp and paper manufacturing). However, its location within the Willamette River Greenway makes it difficult for the City to achieve compatibility with the Greenway goals of protecting natural, recreational and scenic resources of the river corridor and inside the WRG Compatibility Review Boundary. Debris cleanup and riparian planting projects involving citizens partnering with the Blue Heron Paper Company are currently possible and should be pursued.

Parcels adjoining McLoughlin Boulevard with commercial or office uses should not be pursued for public ownership. These parcels will be zoned to implement the Downtown Community Plan and are integral to the plan's goals as well as regional 2040 goals for Oregon City as a regional center.

## **GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **Goal 15.1: Protect the Willamette River Greenway**

**Ensure the environmental and economic health of the Willamette River by adopting goals, policies and procedures that meet the Willamette River Greenway Statewide Planning Goal 15.**

#### **Policies**

- Policy 15.1.1 Protect the significant fish and wildlife habitat of the Willamette River by maximizing the preservation of trees and vegetative cover.
- Policy 15.1.2 Preserve major scenic views, drives and sites of the Greenway.
- Policy 15.1.3 Encourage access to and along the river consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Waterfront Master Plan.
- Policy 15.1.4 Restrict new substations and power line towers in the Greenway or river view corridor.

- Policy 15.1.5 Protect and maintain parks and recreation areas and facilities along the Willamette River to minimize effects on the Greenway and in accordance with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Waterfront Master Plan.
- Policy 15.1.6 Review uses proposed for inside the Willamette River Greenway Compatibility Review Boundary for consistency with local goals and policies for that area.