

A VISION FOR THE  
**WILLAMETTE FALLS**  
LEGACY PROJECT



# acknowledgements

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Mark Gamba, 2013

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# introduction

Walk down Main Street in historic Oregon City, and you'll reach a complex of hollow industrial buildings. This former paper mill separates Oregonians from one of the state's scenic and cultural treasures: Willamette Falls, roaring through the river just out of view. But not forever. You hold in your hands a new blueprint that lays the groundwork to transform the property, creating new jobs while reconnecting Oregonians with the Falls.

Thousands of Oregonians have weighed in on the future of the land since the Blue Heron Paper Company closed in 2011. Oregon City, Metro, Clackamas County and the State of Oregon have teamed up to explore possibilities. The property generates strong public interest, not only because it provides a front-row seat to the most powerful waterfall in the Pacific Northwest, but also because it is an important Native American cultural site and the birthplace of industry in Oregon.

The Framework Master Plan is expected to be approved in 2014, solidifying the community's vision and clearing barriers to redevelopment. Under this plan, the 22-acre site will be rezoned for a vibrant mix of shops, restaurants, offices and housing. A network of walking- and biking-friendly streets would link the new district with the rest of downtown Oregon City. It gives a future developer 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, while creating a unique sense of place in the new waterfront district. Preserve key historic structures when it's feasible – and, when it's not, incorporate artifacts into the design. Promote healthy habitat along the Willamette River. **And build something that will last.**

**“...create a place not with just 150  
years in mind, but 1000 years.”**  
*public comment*



A vision for a garden within the walls of the Oregon City Woolen Mill foundation.



# the vision

Willamette Falls is one of the nation's most beautiful and historic natural wonders. The largest waterfall in the Pacific Northwest, this has long been an important cultural and gathering place for Native American Tribes. The Falls sit at the end of the Oregon Trail, and throughout the late 1800s were the heart of a thriving frontier city. This became the site of energy generation for Oregon's early industries, including the state's first paper mill and the world's first long distance electrical power transmission line from Oregon City to Downtown Portland.

The Blue Heron Paper Company, which closed its doors in 2011, was the last in a succession of businesses that contributed to a strong working waterfront in Oregon City. Its departure left a gap to be filled in the city's historic downtown and in the local economy. The 22 acre site formerly occupied by the mill was purchased in May 2014.

Oregonians now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-imagine Willamette Falls and its surroundings. In cooperation with the new owners, Oregon City, Metro, Clackamas County, and the State of Oregon are concluding a yearlong master plan and visioning process that will rezone the site to provide needed flexibility and certainty for a new generation of investors while reducing and removing barriers to redevelopment.

A vision also emerged during the master planning process. The public process articulated a future for the site that provides public access to the Falls, restores habitat, redevelops the property to honor the site's past, and re-connects to Oregon City's historic downtown. This place will feel like an extension of downtown, not a separate campus, and will include generous spaces for the public to experience the site and reconnect to the Willamette River.

A bold first step is needed to reconnect Oregonians to this statewide landmark, and by doing so, provide the boost in value to the site needed to ready it for redevelopment and associated employment opportunities. A new **Riverwalk** that connects historic downtown Oregon City to the Falls can be this first step. By providing public access to the Falls and creating a world-class public space, the partners will transform this derelict site into a compelling new investment opportunity. The partners are committed to securing funding for the Riverwalk from local, state, federal, private and philanthropic sources. In 2013, the State Legislature authorized \$5 million in lottery-backed bonds to seed transformation of the site by providing this public access.

Creating a unique public setting at the Falls has the potential to shape a new identity and sense of place not only for the Blue Heron site and the regional center of downtown Oregon City, but in the surrounding areas of West Linn and Clackamas County as well. This document describes the community vision for this place and provides concrete strategies to help realize the project's success and implement that vision. Achieving this sustainable vision will take time and concerted collaboration by the public partners - but it is without doubt a worthy and important effort for our region and for Oregon.

# regional context



The Willamette Falls Legacy Project is located in the heart of the Pacific Northwest, on the Willamette River in Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon. The 22-acre riverfront site is a visible and accessible destination within a 30-minute driving distance of several Northwest cities, including Portland, West Linn, Lake Oswego, Vancouver, Gresham and Wilsonville.

Oregon City itself, with a growing population of 32,000, is a Regional Center under the

Portland Metro region's long range plan. Destinations within the region, including Multnomah Falls and the Columbia Gorge, Washington Park, the Oregon Coast, Mt. Hood and others, draw millions of visitors each year. The Willamette Falls Legacy Project is a timely opportunity for the Pacific Northwest public to rediscover and celebrate this hidden local gem. Millions of locals and visitors alike will soon rediscover the falls as a result of this transformative project.



Mt Hood from Washington Park, Portland



Multnomah Falls



Portland



Oregon Coast



# the place



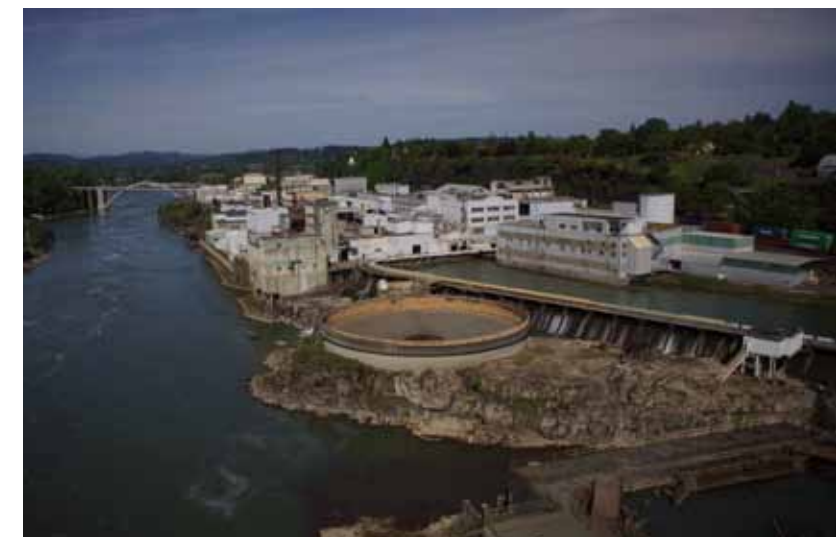
Mark Gamba, 2014

The southern portion of the Willamette Falls Legacy Project site lies beside the calm, upper portion of the Falls, providing visitors with an ideal vantage point over the water. The riverbank of the site, currently occupied by old paper mill structures, comes into direct contact with the powerful flow of the lower falls. The falls have been significantly altered by industry but their power and drama are still evident.

The juxtaposition of historic industrial infrastructure with the stunning natural landmark of Willamette Falls gives the site a distinct character with great potential for public access and use. Redevelopment of one of the Pacific Northwest's most unique places offers unparalleled opportunities to continue the reinvigoration of Oregon City's economy, culture, and ecological health.



Historic postcard (OHS)



Overview of the mill site, showing upper and lower river edges (ATI)

# site character



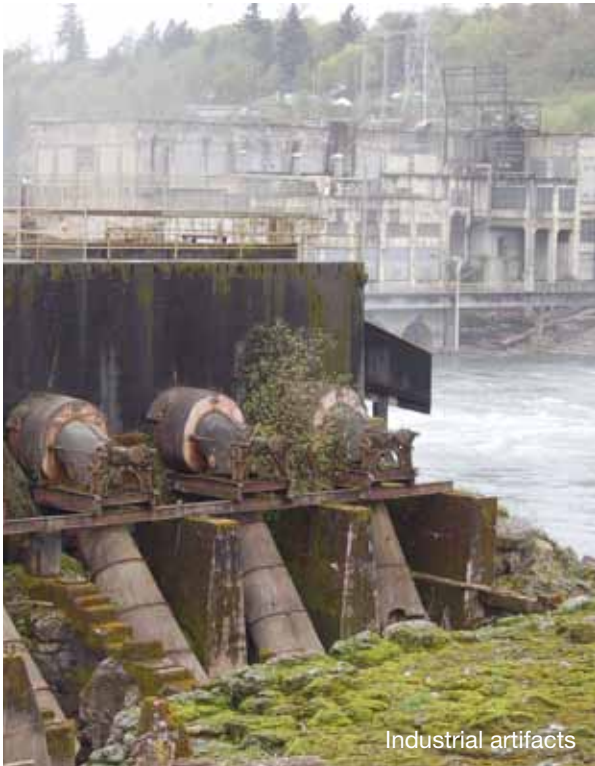
Patterns of industrial remnants



Rail spur south of site



Site from across the Willamette River



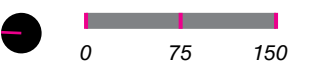
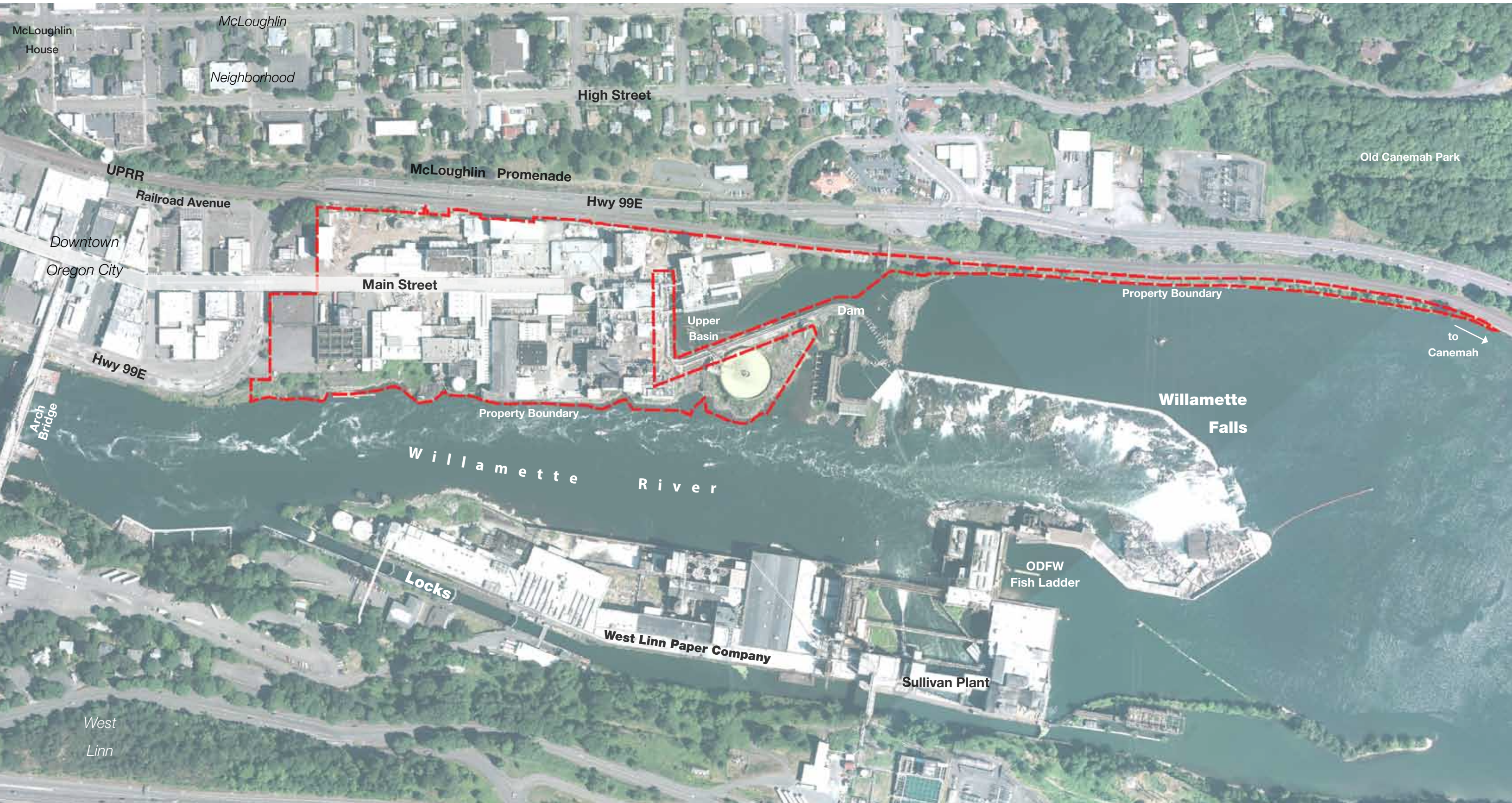
Industrial artifacts



Reflections on the upper basin



Basalt walls and cliffs



# four core values

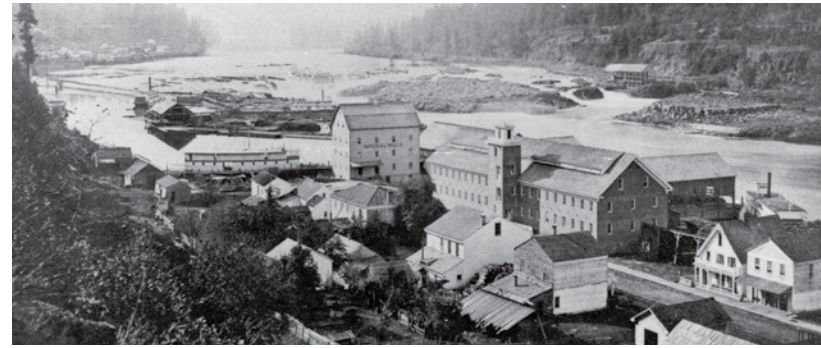
Four shared values will shape the future of the Willamette Falls site. The Oregon City City Commission first articulated these values in the spring of 2011. All four values together inherently address a sustainable future for this site. The values have been used as the framework for all project decisions and will continue to guide future decisions.

**Historic and Cultural Interpretation:** Visitors will learn about the rich history of the Oregon City riverfront. Willamette Falls served as an important cultural site for Native American tribes. The Falls also tell the story of the area's industrial development – John McLoughlin built the Pacific Northwest's first lumber mill here. And, in 1844, Oregon City became the first incorporated city west of the Rocky Mountains. As the End of the Oregon Trail and the birthplace of Oregon, it served as a transition point for thousands of new Oregonians.

**Public Access:** Visitors will get a front-row seat to experience the majestic and truly extraordinary Willamette Falls. Inaccessible for public enjoyment and effectively removed from the public consciousness for more than 150 years, the Falls are one of the most scenic places along the Willamette River. They also provide an important opportunity for Oregonians to connect with the river, which is isolated from many of the communities along its route.

**Healthy Habitat:** This place is critical for water quality. Fish and lamprey that travel the river pass through or around the Falls. Historically, the Falls were surrounded by unique plants that thrived in microclimates created by the mist. Protecting the site provides an opportunity to re-establish native plant communities, enhancing this ecologically diverse stretch of the Willamette River.

**Economic Redevelopment:** The Willamette Falls property will carry on a tradition of economic development along the riverfront, where mills and industry thrived for more than a century. With the closure of the Blue Heron Paper Company, Oregon City lost 175 jobs – a blow that can be redressed through redevelopment. The partners' actions to date have been aimed at returning part of the site to private development, reinvigorating the downtown as a hub of employment, shopping, business and tourism.



## Historic & Cultural Interpretation

### Key Elements

- Emphasizes unique geology, Willamette River and Willamette Falls
- Honors Native Americans' presence at Willamette Falls: past, present and future
- Honors the significance of the site and the falls to the former Oregon Territory and settlement of Oregon
- Honors the significance of industrial development at Willamette Falls

### Desired Outcomes

- Interactive, holistic and creative interpretation at multiple levels
- Respect and accommodate Native American salmon fishing and lamprey harvest traditions and protection of natural resources
- Increased awareness of all aspects of the cultural and historic significance of Willamette Falls
- Highlight national importance of industrial development at Willamette Falls
- Honor the past by “doing better” now
- Adaptive reuse of existing buildings to support the creation of an authentic place



## Public Access

### Key Elements

- Connects people physically and emotionally with the river
- A complete sensory experience of water is incorporated throughout the site (hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling)
- The site design reflects unique aspects of the place with unifying design elements integrated throughout
- The public space emphasizes arrival by foot, bike or transit while accommodating the automobile
- Sustainability is incorporated throughout the design and the site

### Desired Outcomes

- Permanent, prominent and breathtaking public access to this site, the river, cultural history and the falls
- The public space is generously sized and inviting to a diverse range of peoples, including families and children of all ages
- Multiple, creative and unexpected opportunities are provided to physically connect to the river
- Integration of the site and the pedestrian/bike circulation system into the local and regional trail system north and south
- Integrated connection to downtown Oregon City
- Protected views of intact natural habitats along the river and falls
- Diverse scenic views of the falls and river, including views of the falls that reveal themselves as one proceeds through the site
- The public space and falls access are a catalyst for economic development in Oregon City and enhance the value of development on the site



CCHS

## Healthy Habitat

### Key Elements

- Riparian habitat: opportunities to restore riparian and rocky outcrop areas along the Willamette River above and below Willamette Falls
- Native fish habitat: shoreline and river provide a mixture of habitat elements important to native fish
- Water quality: springs and seeps, stream day-lighting, clean and cool water, and returning existing water rights to in-stream use for fish and water quality
- Floodplain protection: opportunities to maintain or enhance the ability to store flood waters on site during major storm events

### Desired Outcomes

- Restore native trees and shrubs along a 50- to 150-foot buffer along the Willamette River
- Protect and restore rocky outcrops to provide unique habitat for insects, amphibians and rare plants
- Restore floodwater access to its natural floodplain by removing non-essential buildings and infrastructure left from previous industrial use
- Provide important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife species
- Improve water quality through filtration, stormwater attenuation, woody debris and leaf litter inputs into the river
- Restore shoreline habitat complexity, including alcoves and inlets for cool water refuge and off-channel habitat during periods of high river flow
- Provide important resting and movement habitat for Pacific lamprey, salmon and steelhead
- Improve water temperature and chemistry over baseline of existing conditions at the site
- Support efforts by other public agencies to restore habitat in the Willamette River Greenway
- Showcase how urban development can integrate nature and ecosystem services into urban design
- Establish an urban forest canopy along streets and public spaces where suitable soil exists
- Adding flow through the Millrace will increase habitat options for migrating fish



## Economic Development

### Key Elements

- Public access to river and Willamette Falls serves as catalyst for the regional center/downtown
- Access to nature is emphasized throughout development
- Unique quality of the place drives investment
- Creates a synergy for downtown Oregon City, with opportunities that are complementary to the infrastructure available there
- Regional destination drives tourism to Oregon City

### Desired Outcomes

- Continued tradition of working waterfront
- Permanent and short-term job creation
- Increased opportunities for economic development
- Increased value of development on site and nearby
- A revitalized downtown Oregon City and West Linn
- Integrated with a thriving downtown Oregon City, complementing existing businesses and private enterprises
- Public space that supports an active, year-round regional center
- Increased foot and bike traffic that supports new development
- Increased opportunity for private investment
- A model of green development and sustainability
- A new Oregon landmark



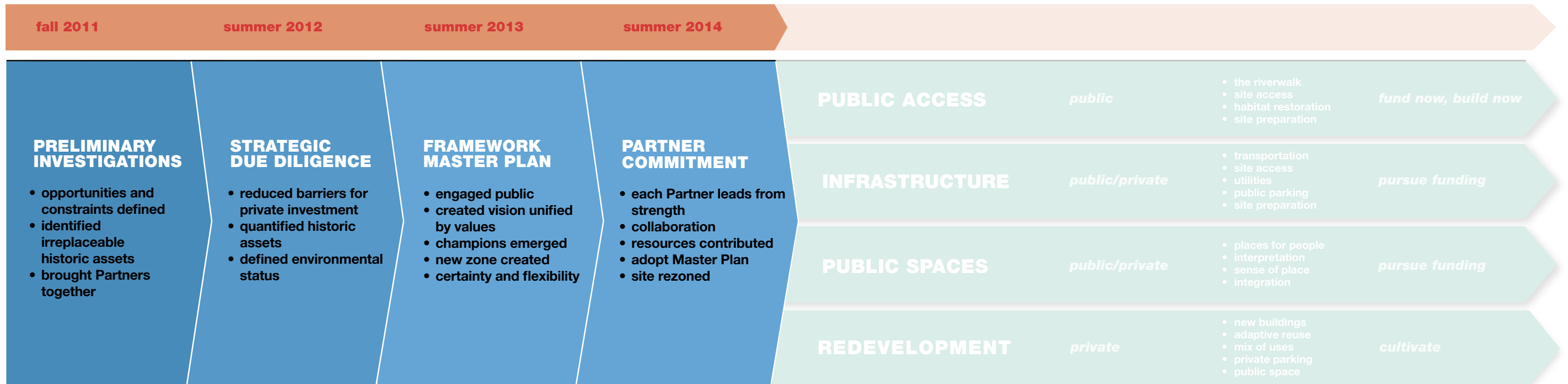
Mark Gamba, 2014

# the hard work to date

Members of the Partners group have been diligently working on efforts to craft a strategy and vision for this site since the Blue Heron Paper Company announced its bankruptcy. This has included preliminary study of the site's physical conditions and buildings. Starting in the fall of 2011, Metro in cooperation with Oregon City, started to holistically look at the site to determine what would be needed to transform the site to a new use. Initial feedback showed a lot of potential but also highlighted the somewhat daunting complexity of the site, leading to the formation of a partnership with the City, Clackamas County, Metro and the State of Oregon, with each entity bringing resources and specialties to the table. The Partners continued due diligence in 2012 and performed a Phase I and Phase II environmental assessment, and looked further into the historic and structural conditions of the buildings. This due diligence quantified a number of previously unknown conditions, which will save time and resources for future site owners and developers. By the summer of 2013, the Partners were able to work with the bankruptcy trustee on a collaborative planning agreement for a Framework Master Plan and rezone of the site to further reduce and remove barriers for redevelopment and create a vision for long-term implementation.

Two significant reports have been prepared as a result of this current process. First, the Framework Master Plan revamps regulations to encourage revitalization of the site. It creates a new, mixed-use Willamette Falls Downtown zone to replace industrial zoning and provides a plan for anticipated patterns of development. The master plan locates areas for re-development, open space, streets, habitat restoration, and public paths and trails. Development standards for the area and design guidelines for future buildings are part of the plan, as well as a clear process for future builders to follow when they propose specific projects. Existing protections for flood zones, natural resources, geologic stability, and the Willamette River Greenway remain in place.

This Vision is the second document to emerge. This document summarizes the public's input around the core values, their desire to reconnect with the river and Willamette Falls, and the need to redevelop the site. As part of the extensive public engagement process, a committee of executives and political leaders from all four Partners has met regularly and is committed to continued support for this project.



# public engagement

This Willamette Falls Legacy Project Vision is the result of an intensive, yearlong community engagement process that has built a broad base of supporters and champions. Project leaders and staff connected with thousands of participants through in-person conversations and online forums, including discussions with more than 62 local and regional groups ranging from civic to business, environmental, and government organizations. Project staff spoke one-on-one with hundreds of people of all ages at seven summer events including farmers markets, West Linn's Centennial Celebration, and Concerts in the Park.

The first of three community interactive events was held at the First City Festival in July 2013 in Oregon City, where participants contributed nearly 1,000 distinct comments and ideas for the site. In July and August, more than 2,100 people commented through Metro's regional Opt In Online Opinion Panel and the online survey on the project website. Approximately 130 people learned and shared ideas in small group discussions at the second community interactive event in October, at the Museum of the Oregon Territory.

A second round of surveys through Opt In and the project website garnered an additional 1,900 responses. Nearly 100 people participated in the third community event at Ainsworth House to review the draft Master Framework and Demonstration Plans. In addition, nearly three dozen participants signed up to become community champions to support implementation of the Willamette Falls Legacy Project.

On March 6th, 2014, approximately three hundred supporters from throughout the region gathered at KEEN Headquarters in Portland to celebrate the vision and spread the word about this historic opportunity. The number of Community Champions soared to more than one hundred people as elected officials and residents alike pledged their support to help implement the vision.

The project team continues to stay connected with champions and engage new champions each week. Hundreds of people stay informed through the project website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, the Oregon City News, e-mail newsletters, and a weekly online blog. The Facebook page alone reaches more than 1,400 people on a daily basis with updates on events as well as with a photo of the day. Weekly guided tours of the site are one more way in which members of the public can get involved. There are over 150 project Champions and as the Riverwalk proceeds, this number will grow. Much of the past year's success can be attributed to a robust outreach program to the community through many outlets. Future phases of implementation should strive to match this level of public engagement.



Information table at First City Festival, July 2013



Community Interactive Event #2, October 2013



Partner commitment displayed at the Regional Champions' Event, March 2014



# project partners

## Who are the partners?

The core public partners are Oregon City, Clackamas County, Metro and the State of Oregon.

## Why they partnered

Collaboration exceeds the sum of individual efforts, creates a united front, and demonstrates a spirit of cooperation that instills public and private sector confidence. Funding opportunities that were out of reach for one agency alone are viable when multiple players come together strategically as a team. Focused on a common goal with multiple benefits, partnerships withstand pressures of political change. The partners understood that lifting a 23-acre industrial ruin to a world-class destination would take more effort than any one agency alone could take on.

With the closure of the Blue Heron Paper Co. Oregon City had 23 acres of vacant industrial waterfront property and needed to reduce barriers for acquisition to make redevelopment a reality. Clackamas County came to the table to assist with redevelopment and job creation. Metro entered the partnership recognizing the once in 100 year opportunity for public access to the Willamette Falls while also ensuring restoration of habitat in this rare and unique section of the Willamette River both of which support creating conditions for private investment and redevelopment. Similarly the State of Oregon saw the opportunity to create public access and also to honor the history and culture of the site's Native American and industrial history. Together the partners created the shared values of economic redevelopment, public access, historical and cultural interpretation and habitat restoration in order to bring the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to life.

## How they work together

Timely, engaging, clearly communicated, and frequent meetings facilitate this effective partnership between Oregon City, Clackamas County, Metro and the State of Oregon. Each partner is represented by two elected officials and an executive manager. They meet to ensure accountability for shared expectations; reflect on goals, roles, and functions; and provide continued leadership, direction and support.

The partners have documented their commitment to the Riverwalk in a Memorandum of Understanding recognizing that in order to spur redevelopment the first critical investment is a Riverwalk that provides access to the Falls.

## What they've done

Starting in 2011, creating a shared vision and goals launched the Willamette Falls Legacy Project from concept to reality. Each partner agency has contributed time, staff and financial resources to move this former industrial site from the past toward the future.

Collectively more than \$1 million has been contributed by the partners to support due diligence work and planning. An additional \$5 million in state funding was committed in 2013 to get the site ready, with strong bi-partisan support.

Partners' demonstrated collaboration on the project helped secure a private buyer for the 23-acre industrial site in spring 2014. Their guidance and leadership helped ensure the submittal of a land use application zone change in July 2014 to open the site to the public for the first time in decades and create new opportunities for private development.

## What's next

A robust community engagement process in 2013 connected with thousands of Oregonians to shape the vision for the Willamette Falls Legacy Project. The partners' continuing leadership and support will help ensure that vision is realized. Existing funding opportunities will be leveraged to prepare the 23 acres for redevelopment, including the creation of a riverwalk to the falls as a priority project to connect people with this iconic natural wonder.

The partners are committed to working together to see the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to the finish. They look forward to opportunities to bring in other key players – private, public and non-profit – to create a world-class destination that everyone can be proud to call their own.

*There are here three falls on a line of rocks extending across the river, which forms the bed of the upper channel. The water is precipitated through deep abraded gorges, and falls perhaps forty feet at an angle of about twenty degrees. It was a beautiful sight when viewed from a distance, but it became grand and almost sublime as we approached it nearer. I mounted the rocks and stood over the highest fall, and although the roar of the cataract was almost deafening, and the rays of the bright sun reflected from the white and glittering foam threatened to deprive me of sight, yet I became so absorbed in the contemplation of the scene, and the reflections which were involuntarily excited, as to forget every thing else for the time...*

John Kirk Townsend (1835)



Willamette Falls, c 1870s

OHS

# I. historical & cultural interpretation

The Willamette Falls Legacy Project site's striking forms and patterns represent centuries of shaping by powerful natural and cultural forces. The power of ancient geomorphology is expressed here in the presence of a complex, thunderous waterfall, created by basalt flows blocking the course of a mighty river. These falls create an intrinsic sense of place and are a magnet for settlement and human interaction.

The river has two levels at the site: a calm, upper river ideal for travelers to approach and bypass the falls, and a wild, turbulent lower river that carves a channel below a steep riverbank. Millions of years of the river crashing over rock left a flat bench below looming cliffs, a natural place for native people to gather and trade for time immemorial. They gathered to celebrate the rich harvest of fish trying to work their way upstream and trade with other tribes.

The importance of this place as a transition point along the main transportation artery of a growing territory meant that it also became a destination for settlers and the people who managed this settlement. Long before streets were platted in Seattle, Portland or San Francisco, Oregon City's Main Street extended from the falls, through this site and north through the basalt bench, becoming the spine of a thriving pioneer

community and the legendary end of the Oregon Trail. At the south end of Main Street, a substantial structure has long stood as a sentinel welcoming travelers to the City, marking the furthest extent of settlement and industry at the falls. New settlers built industries and businesses centered on the transport of goods around the falls and on the use of the roaring volume of water to produce power.

As the administrative center of a growing U.S. territory, Oregon City was where the surrounding wild landscape was tamed and organized into a network of streets and settled with homesteads. The core of the pioneer-era Oregon City embodied this orderly distribution of land, with a grid of streets laid atop the basalt, intersecting with Main Street. As industry thrived in the late 1800s, the old pioneer community shifted away from the crashing water, replaced by larger and larger industrial buildings such as the Oregon City Woolen Mills. These were still subordinate to the river's power, located away from violent floodwaters. Over time, the industrial buildings crept riverward, filling in the crevices of ancient waterfall and consuming more and more of the original settlement.

Still, the fundamental organizational element of this site remained, and ever-larger industrial structures continued to line Main Street. This thoroughfare had a sense of enclosure and a continued connection to the City, expressed many times daily as the flow of workers came and went down that street. Subsequent paper mills at this site grew almost organically, adding a building here and a shed there, yet the underlying grid can still be deciphered. Looming cliffs to the east remain, while the western spread of development has been contained by the rushing waters of the river, accelerated by their descent over the falls.

The following section describes the site's cultural and historic resources and identifies strategies for protecting these resources and examples of how to incorporate them into new redevelopment.

**“Include the native history of the site in the art, in the design.”**  
*public comment*

# history & culture



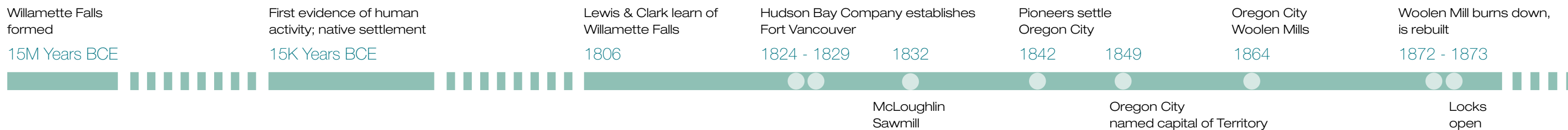
Rick Bowmer/Associated Press

Tribal members congregate at the Falls each year for a lamprey harvest that is associated with important ceremonies.

Archaeological evidence of Native American activity around Willamette Falls potentially dates to as early as 13,000 years ago, after the last of the Missoula Floods swept down the Columbia River. Falls on major rivers were perhaps the single most desirable setting for Native American settlements. Anadromous fish congregating below falls awaiting favorable river conditions for moving upstream could be easily taken by Native fishermen. Some of the earliest evidence of prehistoric peoples in the Pacific Northwest has been found at archaeological sites on the Columbia River, most notably at Celilo Falls near The Dalles, where the record of occupation extends back 10,000 years. A similar very long record of Native American occupation may be in evidence at Willamette Falls.

After The Dalles, Willamette Falls is often cited as the second most important trading center in the Pacific Northwest. Willamette Falls is mentioned prominently in the oral literature and stories of Natives, including the Chinookan and Kalapuyan peoples. Archaeological evidence of Native American activity could be found during redevelopment and could contribute to the picture of native life ways in this critical period.

The project partners recognize the special role and voice that native americans have in the land and water around Willamette Falls. This land has been occupied and used by members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. The project partners have initiated dialogue with each of these tribal governments to include their voice and perspective in the development and use of this special place.



# history & culture

*\*This is an excerpt from a complete history prepared by Stephen Dow Beckham (edited for brevity)*

The first settlement in the Oregon Territory, at the end of the Oregon Trail, Oregon City's strategic location made it a natural site for industrial development. The Willamette River offered relatively cheap and efficient transportation, abundant fresh water, and the power generated by the drop over the falls. The calculus of these energies drove industrialization.

From the initial investment of the 1830s, Oregon City became known for production of forest products. It was also a logical point for grinding grains to produce flour and meal for human and animal consumption. Its industrial base started with sawmills and flour mills and diversified over time.

In 1862 the Oregon Woolen Manufacturing Company purchased lots on Main Street and water rights from the McLoughlin family. The Woolen Company completed its four-story brick structure in 1864 and doubled it the following year to become the largest industrial plant on the West Coast. The mill burned in 1872 at an estimated capital loss of \$250,000, was immediately rebuilt, and was back in operation by the summer of 1873. Its 100 workers produced flannels, blankets, tweeds and yarns for decades. The Oregon City Woolen Mills marketed its products under the slogan "Woven Where the Wool is Grown." The Jacobs family owned and operated the mills from the Civil War to the Great Depression.

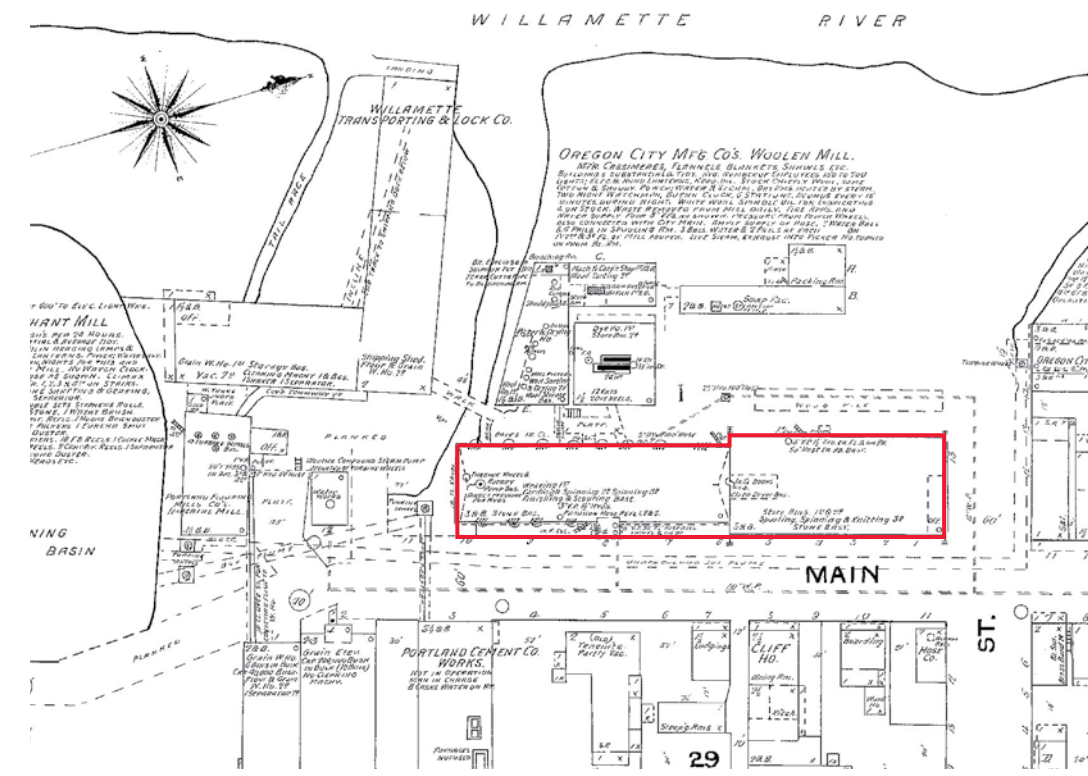
In 1866 the Pioneer Paper Manufacturing Company began manufacturing paper, using water power to transform rags and straw into paper. In 1889 the Willamette Falls Pulp and Paper Company began production of twenty tons of pulp per day and shipped its product to California. That same year electrical transmissions began from the Falls. WFPPC commenced paper production in 1890, the same year that a disastrous flood devastated major parts of the Crown Paper Mill on the west bank. Within a few years, however, both mills were running at capacity.

In 1908 Willard P. Hawley left Crown Paper and turned to the east bank of the river. He purchased property along the south end of Main Street where he established Hawley Pulp and Paper. He leased Station A, the electrical plant at the falls, acquired the old flour mill and its water rights, and by 1909 used the sulphite process to manufacture paper. To develop the site he gave the McLoughlin House to a non-profit organization which moved it in 1909 to the city's upper terrace, in Oregon's first example of historic preservation. In 1941 Congress designated the house a National Historic Site and in 2003 it became part of the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Hawley Pulp and Paper Company defined the east bank of the river at the falls for the twentieth century. Labor disputes arose during World War I and disrupted production on both sides of the river. The Hawley heirs sold the plant in 1948. The Times-Mirror Corporation eventually bought out the multiple interests by 1950 to create Publishers Paper, a wholly-owned subsidiary. The mill concentrated on production of newsprint for its parent company and the Los Angeles Times which grew by the 1960s to have more than one million subscribers.

The sulphite process used for pulping led to chemical discharges into the Willamette River. Journalist Tom McCall, later a dynamic governor of Oregon, saw the problem and documented it in "Pollution in Paradise," an exposé of environmental problems throughout Oregon. In 1972 the mill won a "Cleaning Up Pollution" award from Governor McCall.

Jefferson Smurfit Corporation purchased the mill in 1986 and sold it to its workers in 2000. They and investors created Blue Heron Paper Company. Blue Heron concentrated on processing waste paper, producing newsprint, bags, towels, high brights, and specialty papers. The company faced stiff competition from China for used paper and filed for bankruptcy in 2009, closing on February 23, 2011. This ended 125 years of continuous paper mill use of the site.



1892 Sanborn Map of the site; woolen mill foundations outlined in red.



1870 Woolen Mill along Main St. The Mill's foundations remain.

Hawley Pulp & Paper

1909

Hawley Pulp & Paper sold; Publishers Paper established

1948 - 1950

Jefferson Smurfit

1986

Employees buy mill, establish Blue Heron Paper Company

2000

Blue Heron Paper closes

2011



Steamship Dock (Downstream)

Oregon City Flour Mill

Woolen Mill

Tailrace

Tailrace

Tailrace

Imperial Mill

Steamship Dock (Upstream)

Early Wooden Crib Dam

Sawmill

Drydock



*"There cannot be a better situation for a factory village than on the east side of the river, a dry, wide-spread level extends some distance, and the shores form natural wharves for shipping."*

Samuel Parker, June 14, 1837

1867 view of site from West (OHS)

# historic features



De-Ink Building exhibits a pure geometry that has been lost over a century of additions and renovations.



Mill O extends west from Main Street and the Woolen Mill in this 1955 photo.



The foundations of the original Woolen Mill on Main Street (mill shown here in 1904) remain on site and could be incorporated into a new structure or open space.



#4 Paper Machine has a strong presence and creates a well scaled urban street edge.



Buildings were situated on a street grid with massive basalt cliffs as a natural backdrop.



Hawley/#1 Paper Machine is a significant visual and historic icon and occupies a prominent position on the upper basin and at the south end of Main St.





c. 1970

# strategies to honor the site's history

The Willamette Falls Legacy Project site is among the most historic places in Oregon. Today, many of the built resources on the property have a strong and significant association to Oregon's industrial history. Many of these resources are considered eligible for listing on the National Register. The site's built resources and history, often evoked in non-built ways, could be valuable assets from a cultural, economic and sustainable development standpoint. A repurposed, market-driven site, retaining a strong connection to its past and creatively transformed to new uses, can continue the important role this property has played in the region's history.

Specific economic benefits also support the retention and reuse of some of the historic resources that cannot be captured by non-historically based development. Retention and adaptive reuse of the larger industrial buildings provides a strong template to help improve the quality of future infill. The Willamette Falls site is not currently located within a local or National Register Historic District and there are currently no locally designated historic structures located on the property. Oregon's State Historic Preservation Office indicates that 14 of the buildings located on site are contributing historic structures that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, many of these buildings were custom built for industrial processing and have limited options for market-based redevelopment.

The expectation of the master plan is that future development will retain the historic character of the site at a very fundamental level, and incorporate some of its historic resources into future development plans. Five primary historic structures identified in the plan—De-Ink, Mill O, Hawley, Paper Machine #4, and Woolen Mill Foundations—are particularly important, and should ideally be preserved or adaptively reused. These structures can also play an important role in creating a strong identity for the site, especially when combined with public access and public spaces. Other structures and industrial elements should be incorporated into the design of a future project, as appropriate, since many of them also give a unique character to the property. This second tier of historic structures are somewhat less prominent, or have been identified as difficult to re-use in a modern context. These structures are the Digesters, the Sphere, #1 Paper Machine, Boilers, and the Oregon Flour Mill foundations.

Given the benefits that historic preservation brings to future redevelopment, there should be committed efforts to secure funding for preservation. Identified incentives include:

1. Certified Rehabilitation: Creates a 20% Investment Tax Credit against Federal income tax liability for approved rehabilitation.
2. Oregon Special Assessment for Historic Properties: An Oregon-only benefit, this creates a reduced basis for the calculation of local property taxes during a ten-year period following enrollment.
3. Building Code Relief: Under the Oregon Structural Specialty Code, buildings that are "designated" as historic resources (i.e. listed on the National Register of Historic Places) may be eligible for a waiver of certain building code requirements in the interest of retaining or preserving the qualities of the property that make it historic.

The layers of history represented on the site, peeled back, can provide a much deeper understanding of the power of this place. As the site redevelops, an interpretive plan should be prepared to educate visitors on the historic and cultural significance of the buildings and the site through programming, tours and innovative interpretive materials. The Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition (which crafted the themes below) and a future "Friends of Willamette Falls" should be engaged as natural partners in this area. More importantly, an interpretation plan will help establish a consistent vision to guide the Legacy Project and future owners of parcels within the site, about appropriate ways to honor the site's history and culture.

## Willamette Falls National Heritage Area Themes

**Theme:** U.S. Western Expansion happened because of Settlement at the End of the Oregon Trail

**Sub-theme:** The settlement at the End of the Oregon Trail became the center of government, commerce, culture and industry west of the Rocky Mountains.

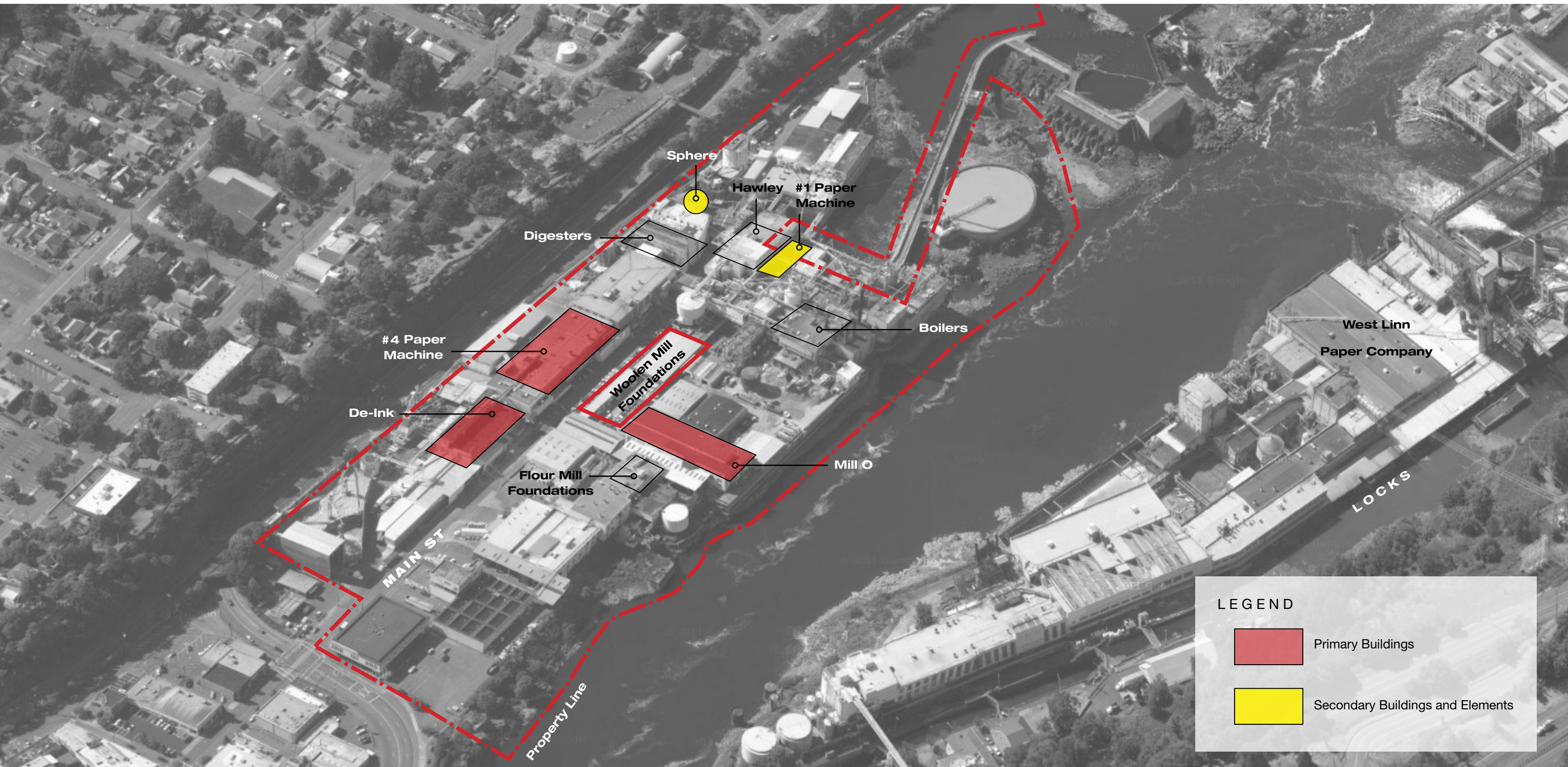
**Theme:** Willamette Falls is the birthplace of industry in the American Northwest

**Sub-theme:** The cataclysmic Ice Age Floods brought abundant resources to the region  
**Sub-theme:** Native tribes and bands were first to the Falls and now work to restore traditional foods, Lamprey and Salmon runs.

**Sub-theme:** Long distance transmission of electricity at Willamette Falls changed the future of the nation.

# key historic features

These buildings and mill remnants have been identified as key historic elements and re-use in some form is encouraged.



# examples

historic & cultural interpretation



Urban Outfitters Headquarters, Philadelphia Navy Yard



c. 1942 c. 2012



University of Washington Tacoma, Joy Building



Clif Bar Headquarters, Emeryville, CA



Old Biscuit Mill, Cape Town, South Africa



Frac Nord Arts Complex, Calais, France



Establishing a viewing platform on the dam overlooking the Falls will attract tourists and regional residents to a formerly inaccessible perspective of this stunning natural wonder.

## II. public access

**“Build the open space first!”**  
*public comment*

Willamette Falls presents an undeniable allure to Oregon residents and visitors. The Falls have been essentially closed to public access for 150 years, with viewing limited to a distant overlook next to a roaring highway. Throughout this project’s public engagement process, the public expressed clear, unambivalent support for the restoration of public access to the Falls and to the Willamette River alongside the mill. This vision illustrates a number of exciting opportunities to provide this access, integrated with a significant new public space that will provide an amenity to future private development.

The vision also responds to long-term civic goals of a continuous riverfront path along Oregon City’s Willamette River frontage. Regional goals of a trail connection south to Canemah and the natural area at Canemah Bluffs could be achieved by converting a former rail spur into a trail through the site.

Also proposed is a thorough set of specific improvements to create multimodal access to future private redevelopment on the site, with a restored grid of walkable and bikeable streets as well as vehicular access enhancement at the north entrances to the site. After many years of restricted access, the people of Oregon can now rediscover their falls.

# historic street grid

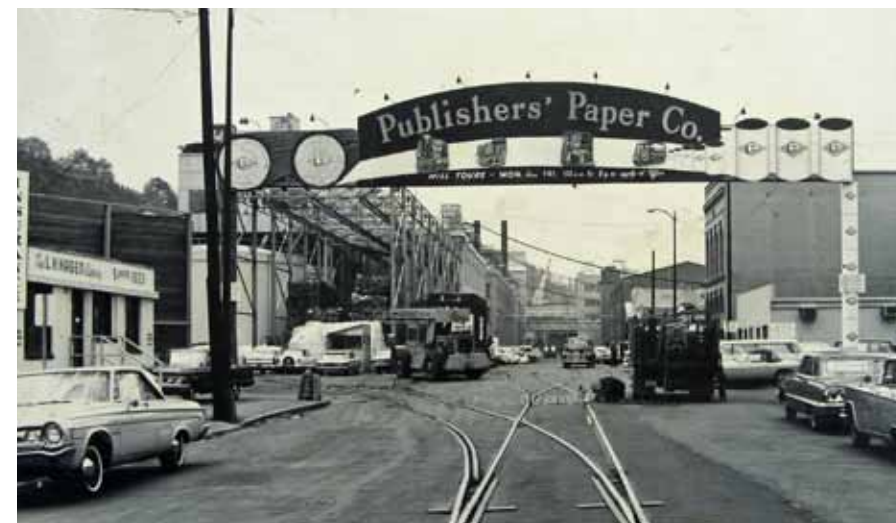
Most western U.S. cities were platted on a grid of streets to enable orderly distribution of property to settlers. Oregon City's grid was established in 1850 and included streets immediately adjacent to Willamette Falls, where early settlers gathered to take advantage of water power as well as trade and river transport networks. Through the 19th century, the mill site was the heart of Oregon City, with a bustling mix of hotels, taverns, laundries, opera houses and restaurants facing a Main Street that extended south to the Imperial Mill at the Falls.

The successor to early mills, Hawley Pulp and Paper Company, grew significantly, displacing remnants of the pioneer town, and by the mid-1920s occupied large portions of both sides of Main Street, flanking the railroad/trolley line that continued to run down Main Street. Continued expansion saw the Hawley company, and then later Publishers Paper and others, completely absorb all of Main Street south of 4th Street, resulting in the closure of the public right of way. The original plat, with Main Street and the numbered cross-streets, was vacated within the mill site.

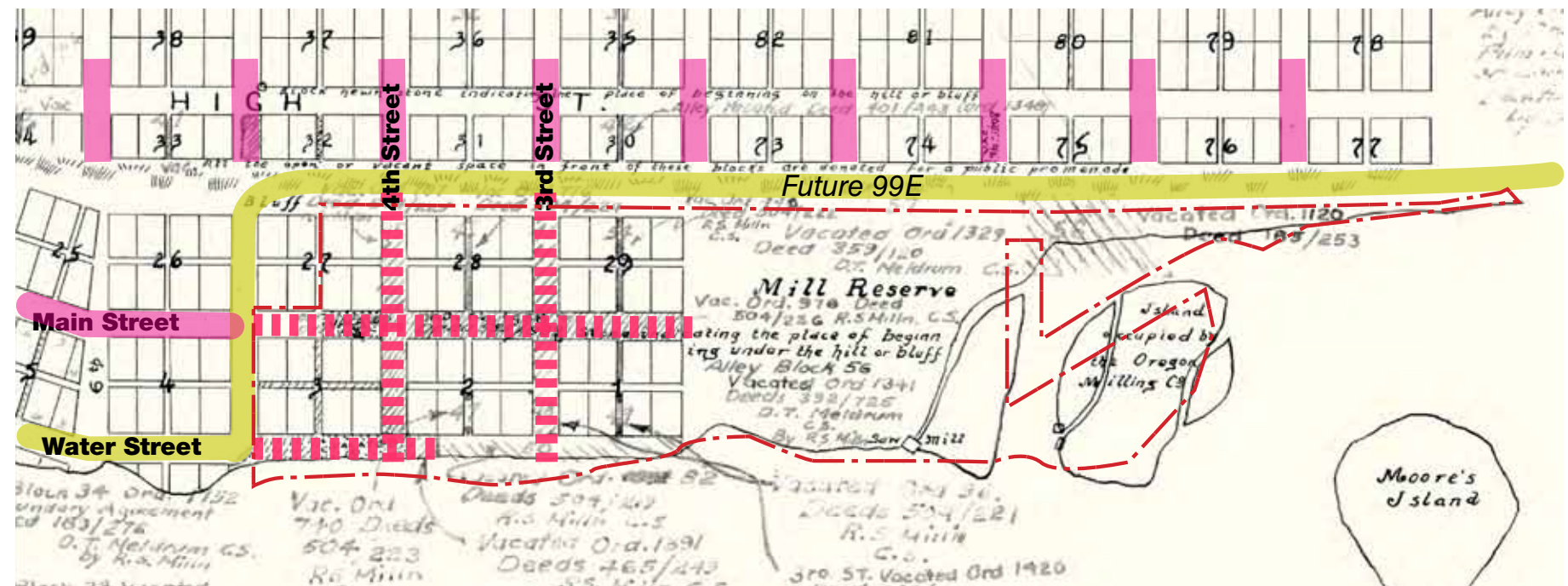
The "street wall" formed by the large vertical facades of #4 Paper Machine and De-Ink, fronting the Main Street right-of-way, reflects and reinforces the history of industrial development, while echoing the original importance of Main Street to Oregon City. This establishes a re-connected Main Street, extending south again to provide public access to the Falls and a seamless extension of downtown.



1874 Looking north from the Woolen Mill tower along Main Street



View south on Main Street in 1966. Mill and other commercial buildings create a sense of enclosure and a continuous street wall.



1850 Plat Map of Oregon City townsite

CCHS

CCHS

# proposed access

The circulation plan for the project is simple, with the most important element being the reconnection of Main Street into the site and the re-establishment of a grid of streets. This new Main Street should be a multimodal, “complete street” with a full mix of users, including transit, walking, bikes, cars, delivery/service and emergency vehicles. The street (along with Water, 3rd and 4th Streets) should be low-speed, with on-street parking and generous sidewalks. It should feel like a seamless extension of Main Street from Oregon City’s existing downtown. The crossing of Highway 99E will be a critical point in this extension, so generous crosswalks are proposed, to encourage pedestrian movement and safety.

Along the riverbank, the re-extension of Water Street into the site is another important circulation element, with the associated Riverwalk serving as a generous sidewalk to Water Street and extending south along the river into the site and to the Falls, with connections back to 3rd and 4th streets.

Circulation into and within the site should strive to meet the following City and State objectives:

## Active Transportation

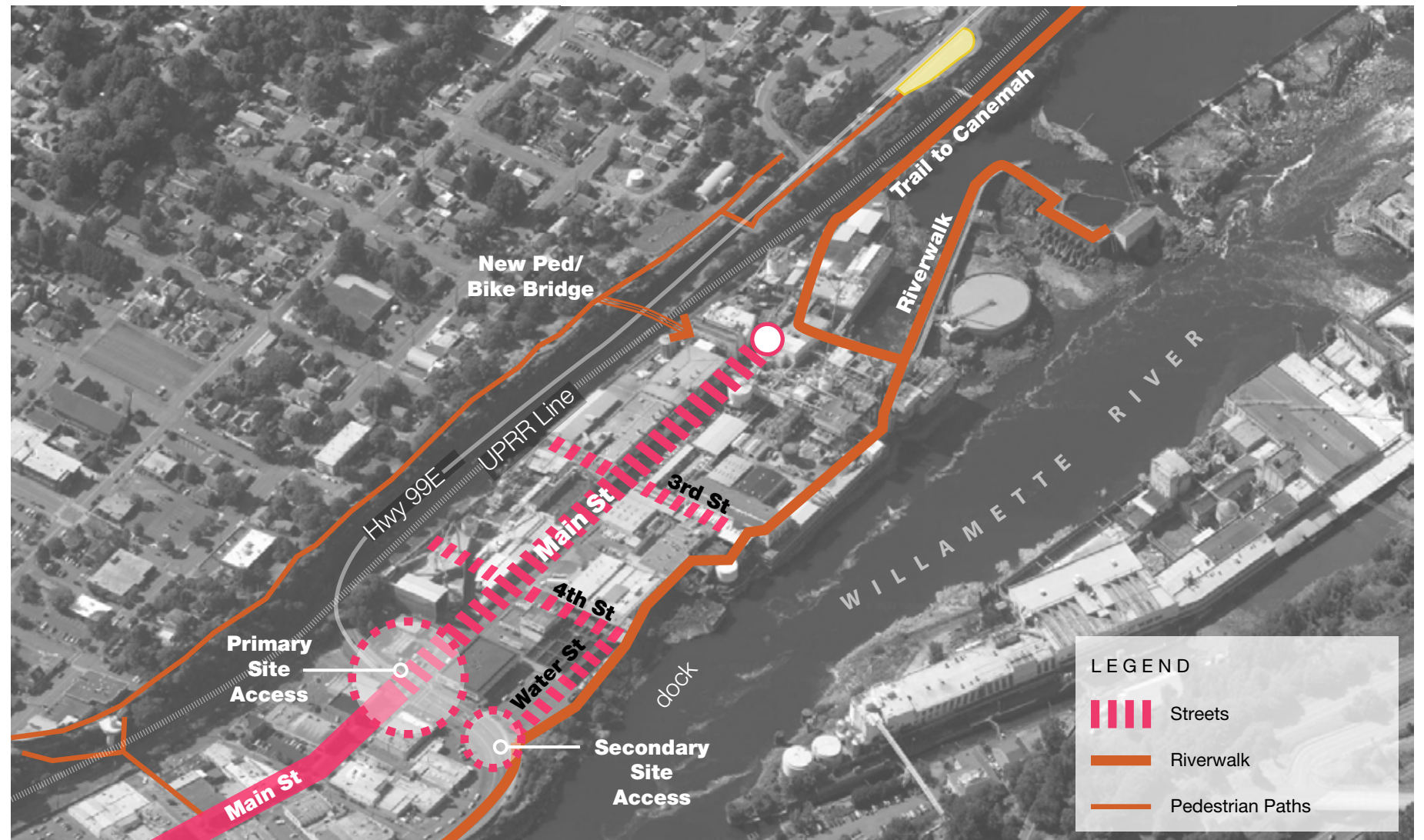
- Strengthening the existing urban crossing of Main Street across McLoughlin Boulevard to the site
- Create at least one pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing of McLoughlin Boulevard and the rail tracks at the south end of the site
- Create a continuous walking and biking connection between the Willamette Terrace and the site and further south to Canemah
- Extend transit service into the site on Main Street and support existing service downtown

## Motor Vehicle

- Institute transportation demand management policies to reduce vehicle trips generated by the site
- Understand that congestion on nearby streets is acceptable and actually reflects a successful and thriving downtown
- Identify at least one additional site access point for motor vehicles
- Allow for safe left-turns for motor vehicles from McLoughlin Boulevard to Main Street
- Enhance the McLoughlin Boulevard/Main Street intersection

The existing private dock offers an opportunity to explore providing a light watercraft launch point into the river and to encourage people to interact with the river safely, both for fishing and other more passive pursuits. Small craft can also be launched along the basin edge of Mill E.

Finally, given the site’s proximity to the main north-south trunk railroad line, future plans should consider and allow for the possibility of passenger rail improvements, with potential for an on-site station.



Rail spur south of site offers potential rail to trail connection to Canemah and Metro Natural Area



Intersection of Main and 99E is sole existing vehicular access point



Main Street can be closed for special events; businesses benefit from sharing visitors to the site



Hwy 99E forms a barrier to access on east edge



# successful waterfronts

People are naturally drawn to the water's edge. When successful, these are vital, sustaining and meaningful places for enjoyment, for commerce, for solitude and for connecting to the natural world. They provide identity to a community as they attract people to work, live and play. Industrial waterfronts throughout the world are evolving, from places solely for private commerce, to public places that provide a diverse mix of uses. As they are rediscovered, communities are connecting to waterfronts for the first time in decades and reimagining them as community assets.

In Oregon City, the waterfront has arguably the richest history of any place in the Northwest, with over 150 years of industrial heritage. There is an opportunity for the first time in generations to bring the public back the water's edge and witness the power and beauty of Willamette Falls. The success of the effort will come from providing open and inviting access through the development of the Riverwalk, to introduce the public to the place where the Northwest's industrial history was founded and connect them directly to the river and the falls for the first time. Significant public spaces will also be established for gatherings, events and casual use.

Waterfront vitality comes from a mix of upland uses including light manufacturing, office, commercial and residential that brings 24-hour activity. Thoughtfully programmed activities, both seasonal and on a daily basis, invite diverse user groups to enjoy the unique and ever-changing setting that a waterfront park provides at different times. Rather than a design tailored to specific activities, waterfronts should provide flexible areas that allow the entire community to interpret and respond to the space.

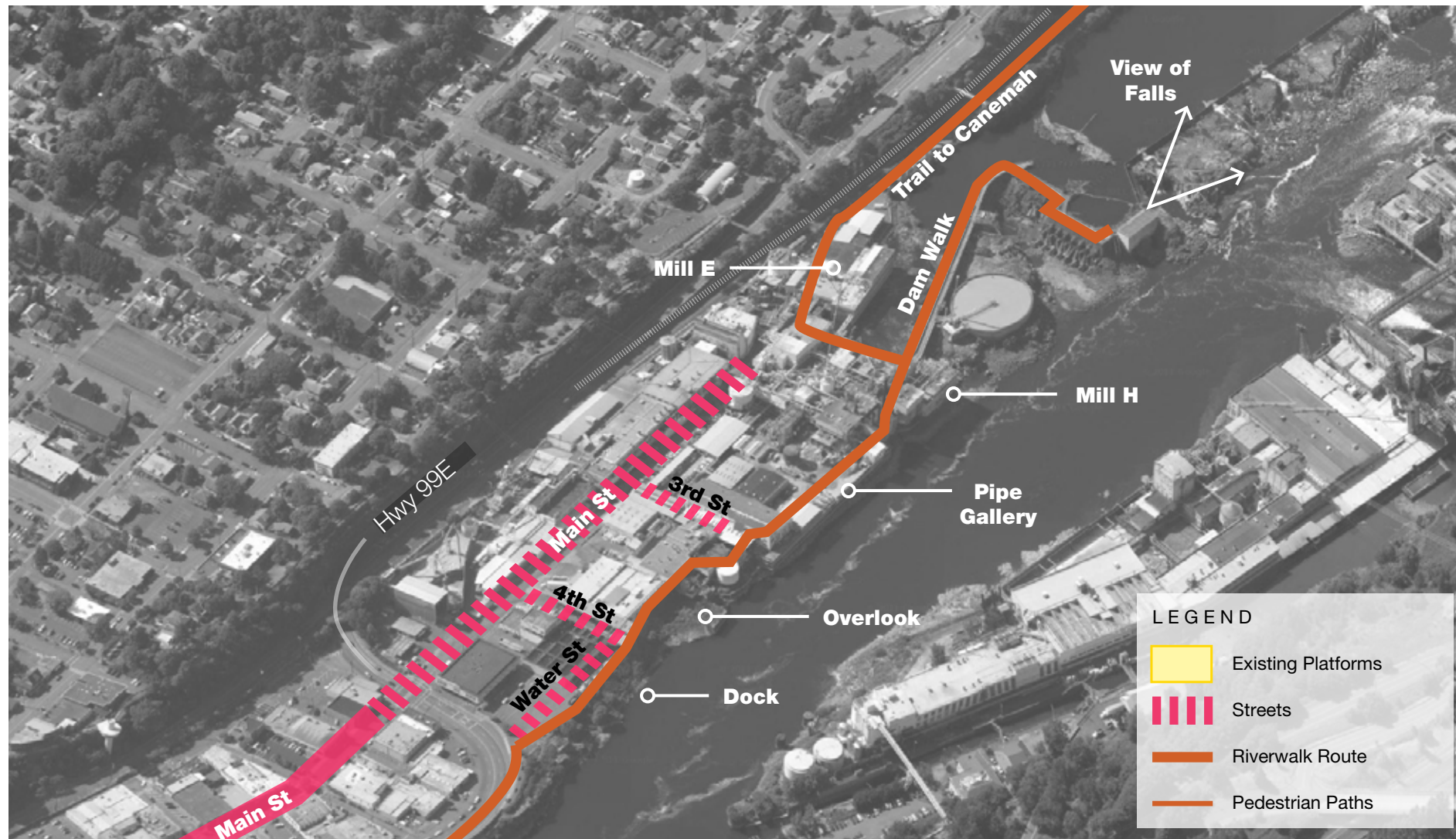
Often, the public space component helps craft a new identity for a community by catalyzing redevelopment and attracting investment, directly improving the viability of upland development. As the waterfront is rediscovered, the upland parcels will gain value and share the waterfront address. Upland redevelopment will in turn bring new vitality to the waterfront through its new population of residents, workers and visitors.





# riverfront access

Future development at the site must meet Willamette River Greenway standards. A key element in these standards is a setback separating structures from the river, to “protect, maintain, preserve and enhance the natural scenic, historic and recreational qualities of the Willamette River.” Within this setback, there will be a number of existing platforms and other structures that offer opportunities to provide public access to the river, both physically and visually. The following pages describe some of these opportunities, in the form of a walk from north to south along the riverbank. Further study is needed to explore the feasibility of all these potential access concepts.



Trail to Canemah



Falls View



Upper Basin at Mill E



Overlook and Riverwalk



Pipe Gallery and Mill H



Water Street



Dam Walk

# water street

Together with a Main Street reconnection to downtown, re-establishing Water Street will play an important role in reconnecting the site to the community. Water Street was a functioning city street for many years. It was slowly subsumed into mill operations, but remained a public right of way into the 1970s (see photo below). By re-opening Water Street, the plan provides a secondary access point to the site, reducing the traffic burden on Main Street and its intersection with Highway 99E. Water Street also provides for a public frontage to the Willamette River and it will become the northern leg of the Riverwalk.

Along Water Street, the Riverwalk will take the form of a wide esplanade that also serves as the street's sidewalk. Street trees and parked cars will buffer users from the traffic entering and exiting the site. Beautiful materials and overlooks will create a memorable gateway to Willamette Falls.



potential



CCHS



existing

# riverwalk



Achieving the vision for the Willamette Falls property will not happen at once. A catalytic public project is required to bring additional visitors to Oregon City and reinvigorate the property as a place conducive to redevelopment.

The Riverwalk will provide public access to the riverfront and Willamette Falls, becoming the fundamental driver for future site development and private investment. It will create continuous public access to view and experience the river, creating an amenity for private redevelopment and an opportunity for habitat restoration. The Riverwalk will link a series of overlooks, platforms and docks, such as the former fuel dock shown here, along the river's edge to the Falls, and connect to the proposed street grid and future open spaces.

The illustration on the following page demonstrates how the existing pipe gallery platform can be repurposed as another leg of the Riverwalk.



# the riverwalk



existing



# willamette falls dam



potential

There has been a dam at Willamette Falls since early Euro-American settlers arrived and recognized the potential for water-powered industry. From the earliest small wooden crib dam to divert water to mills, to today's concrete structure that provides a consistent water level for Portland General Electric's (PGE) Sullivan Plant, there have been efforts to harness the immense power of the Willamette River pouring over the Falls. Before the closure of the Blue Heron Paper Company, water was drawn through the sea wall at the upper basin to power industrial machinery. The current dam is owned by PGE, who have expressed interest in providing public access on the dam's surface and allowing pedestrians to walk out to an existing platform perched close to the Falls (the foundations of the former Station A). This will be an overlook only, with no plans for direct pedestrian access to the Falls (see illustration on page 26).

Salvage activities at the former Blue Heron mill site have removed much of the industrial piping and wiring that once ran alongside the dam's guardrail, revealing hints of the potential for the dam's surface to be used as a unique public walkway out into the river. New guardrails and a refurbished walking surface are recommended, along with lighting to provide safe and enjoyable access to the Falls.



existing

# canemah connection



proposed

Passenger trolleys once passed through the site on their way to a public park at Canemah, bringing weekenders from Portland to enjoy the Falls vicinity. A rail spur remained through the site as an important freight route in and out of the mill. There were also loading docks on the east edge of the mill next to the mainline. This spur has incredible recreational potential as a connection to the Canemah Bluffs Natural Area and Willamette Narrows beyond.

The rail spur can be transformed to a trail, built on the existing railbed. New safety fencing should separate the trail from the Union Pacific mainline, which transports up to 30 trains per day. On the river's edge, bank restoration will provide an attractive, shaded edge to the trail and improve shallow water fish habitat. At the south end of the trail, a new pedestrian bridge is proposed, to allow for safe access to the village of Canemah and the Bluffs above.



OHS



existing

# upper river basin



Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3

The Upper River Basin is a relatively placid lagoon on the southern edge of the site, formerly used to gather logs floated downriver for the paper industry. The existing Mill E structures stand within this basin and once housed company office space and offer a variety of potential reuse scenarios. Three conceptual alternatives for redevelopment along the basin are illustrated at left. All three incorporate recreational light watercraft access, and provide opportunities for the public to view the River safely.

**Alternative 1** envisions maximum preservation and reuse of existing structures for public and commercial use. New walks and open greenspaces around buildings provide direct access to the water.

**Alternative 2** presents a more selective preservation with key buildings retained for use. This alternative shows increased public spaces along the water's edge.

**Alternative 3** maximizes open space along the waterfront, creating a generous area for public recreation. This alternative would establish a welcoming public space at the terminus of Main Street and thus directly connect downtown Oregon City with the river and the Falls. This scenario would also lessen damage from flooding by promoting greenspace, rather than buildings, within the floodplain.



existing

public access

# examples public access



Gantry Plaza State Park, NYC



Gantry Plaza State Park, NYC



Shoshone Falls, Idaho



Riverwalk, Columbus, Georgia





## example: sydney ballast park

“Ballast Point has played a prominent role in the history of Sydney and now the park works to bring that history to life through restoration, installations, and design. The design of the grounds sought to restore the area, while also reminding visitors of all the changes and activities that occurred at the Point, including fishing, hunting, mining, manufacturing, and storage. The 6-acre park now provides walking paths, access for cyclists and green picnic spots with panoramic views to the city and Harbour Bridge.

The restoration of the point included a decontamination of the old industrial facilities and the creation of new wetland areas to filter the site’s stormwater before it enters the harbour. To minimize the use of new materials, the project made use of demolition and recycled materials to build the new infrastructure including the new walls, decks and seating. Modern steel structures feature bright yellow recycled seat belt webbing woven to create a shade covering. Native trees, shrubs and grasses at the site are grown from locally collected seed.” (Source: Bridgette Meinhold, project designer)





Historically, Willamette Falls was surrounded by plants dependent upon the microclimates associated with the waterfall mist. Removing some industrial structures on the site could allow for restoration of basalt cliff-top habitat, as seen on the West Linn side of the river, above.

# III. healthy habitat

The vision plan identifies areas along the riverbank where conservation of natural habitats can occur. The vision advanced for the riverbank is to re-establish a rough edge and water flow that reflects a pattern more indicative of its pre-industrial state, in order to allow more opportunities for fish and wildlife to rest and riparian vegetation to thrive.

Healthy habitat targets for the site include restoring riparian vegetation and rock outcroppings, protecting and enhancing fish habitat and protecting water quality. These targets represent the most regionally rare and threatened habitat types present at the site, and emphasize the importance of protecting water quality. They are designed to capture the site's potential array of native biodiversity and reflect local and regional conservation goals.

**“This area is irreplaceable, so please  
honor the unique quality of the site.”**

*public comment*

# regional natural areas

This place sits at an important transitional zone between upper and lower rivers and at a point where the river is narrowed by rocky margins. Seen within the context of an emerging network of protected natural areas, Willamette Falls becomes a critical nucleus for habitat restoration and providing public awareness of regional open space connections. Green corridors for both wildlife and people can help achieve regional goals of an 'intertwined' system of parks, trails and natural areas. In particular, the connections between Willamette Falls, Canemah Bluffs and Willamette Narrows further south should be high priorities for further preservation and enhancement. The bank of the Willamette on the West Linn side of the river also offers great potential to complement restoration work on the Oregon City side.



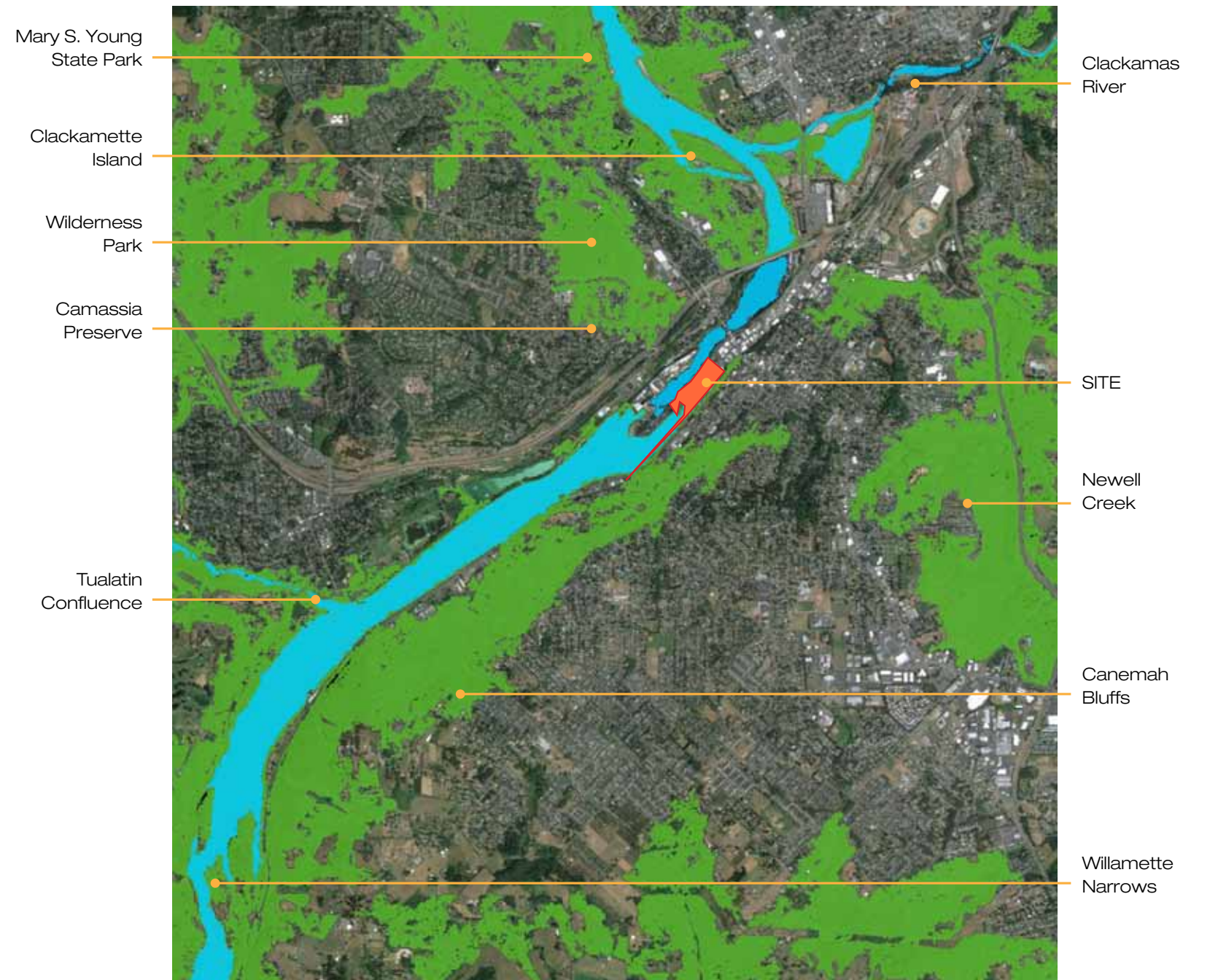
Camassia Preserve



Newell Creek



Canemah Bluffs



# existing conditions



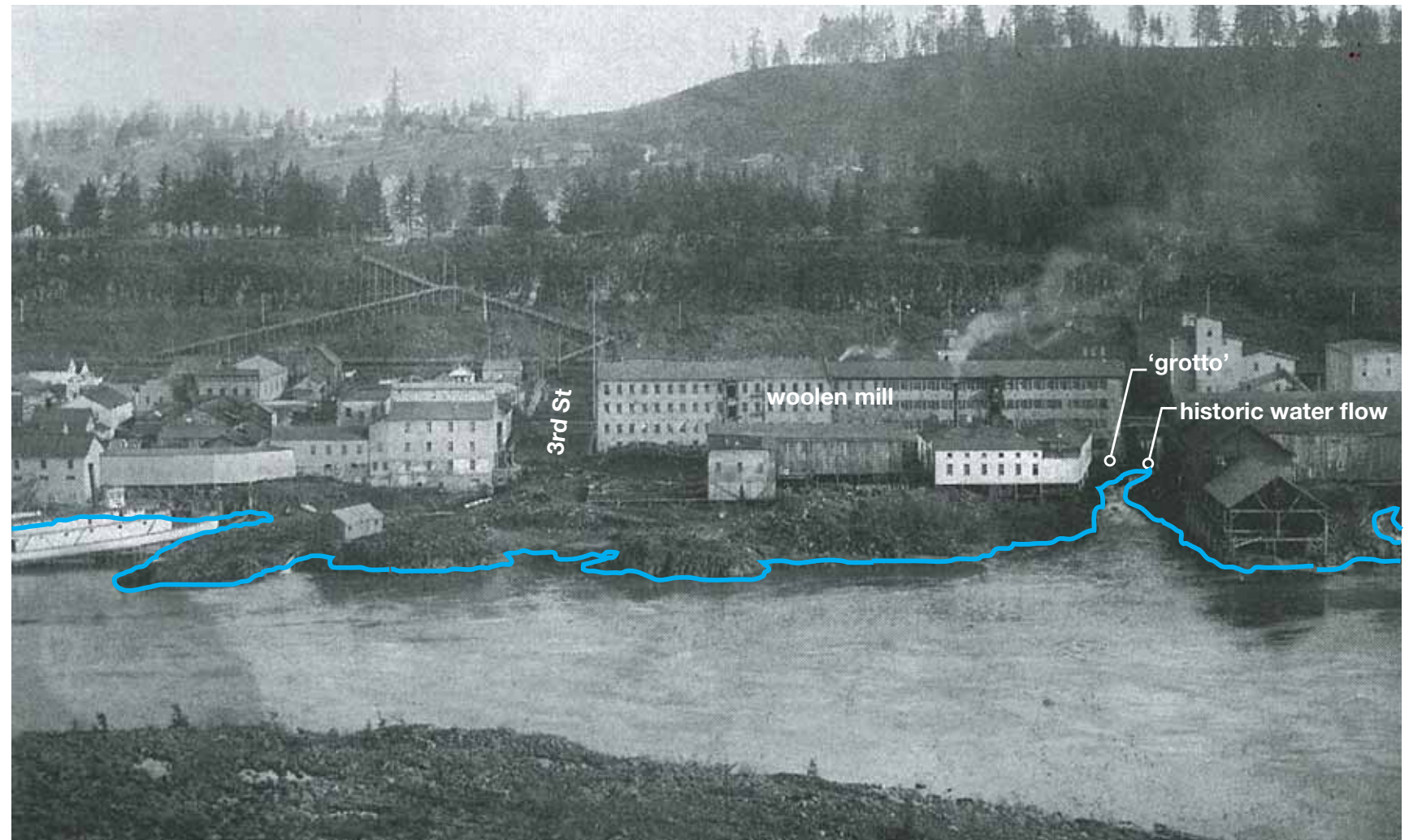
Degraded riverbank, overgrown with invasive species



Stagnant upper basin with algae growth



Former tailrace underneath Mill G



Historic photo (c. 1880) showing the original shoreline, which was considerably more complex than the current linear condition which has been shaped with artificial fill. The original tailraces that conveyed historic water flow still exist underneath site buildings. (OHS photo)

Tailraces, water channels that run below the site, once carved deep into the site at its southern end and have been filled in or channelized as industrial development progressed at the site. The upper basin, a placid section of river above the dam, provided a place for log processing and storage, acting as a sort of mill pond. This water body is now stagnant. Re-establishing tail races, either in part or in full, to receive greater flows from the lagoon above has multiple environmental benefits. The water quality of the upper basin will improve through circulation of fresh water through the area. Below, greater circulation would aerate water flowing through the tailraces, thus providing a more welcoming habitat for fish and other riparian vegetation.

# site hydrology

This site is subject to flooding and last experienced a major flood event in 1996, and 1964 before that. A significant portion of the site, 12.5 acres, is within a City-designated flood management area. The proposed plan for locating public spaces on blocks closest to the river and below flood elevation provides a simple, flood-resilient solution to the arrangement of uses on the site, while taking advantage of the demand for waterfront access and providing potential riparian habitat.

A direct path to comply with city and FEMA flood rules is to organize development following the pattern shown in the plan. The plan does not forbid all development from the blocks designated for public space. For example, Block 3 could develop around its edge for the rehabilitation of Mill O, if the habitable areas of the building were elevated above flood level.

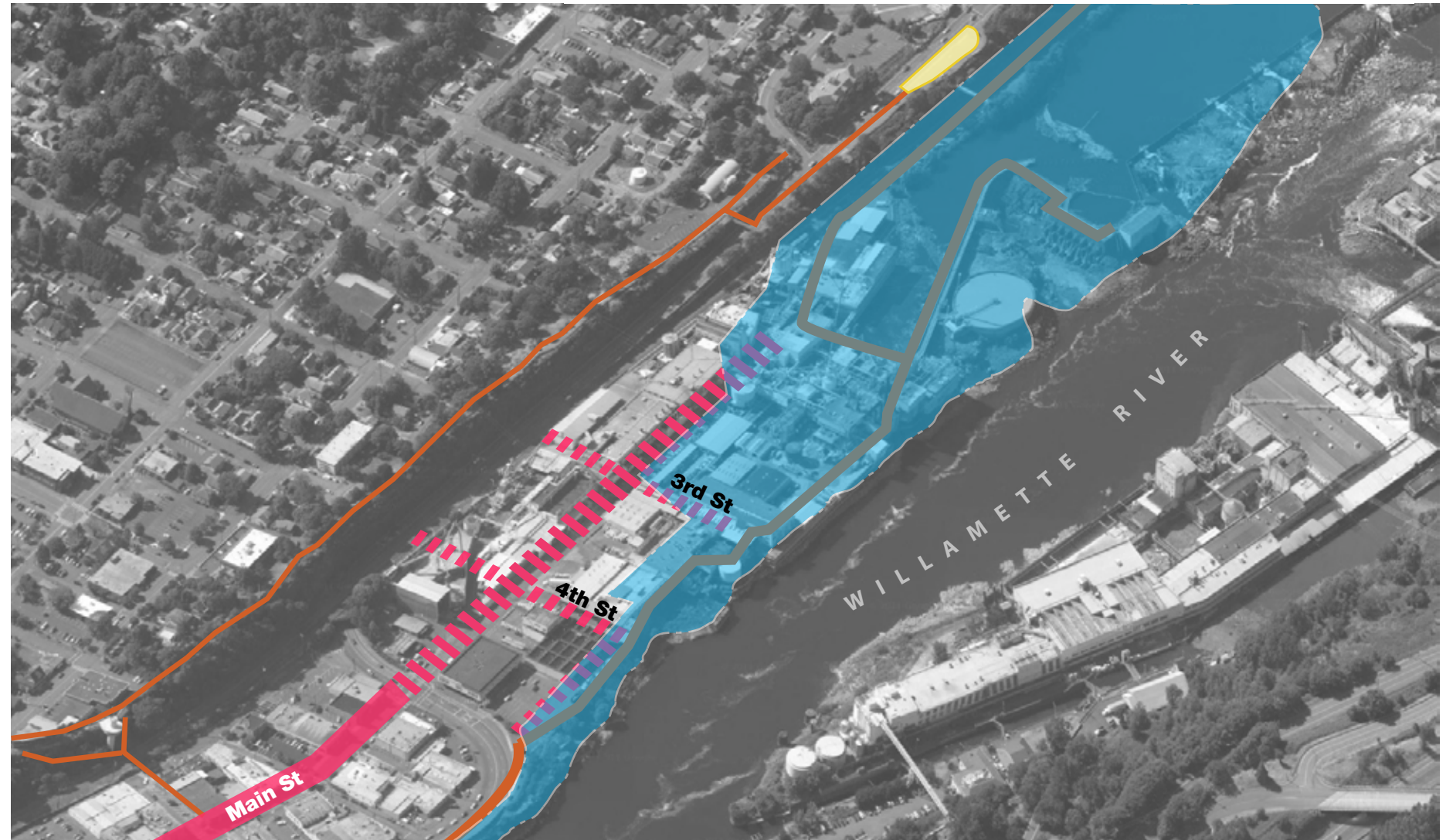
Both Oregon City's and Metro's codes permit development within floodplains with balanced cut and fill. If a property owner can meet the balanced cut and fill requirement, then the development is assumed to have no net impact on flood elevations. Specifically, it is expected that the city will require a hydrologic analysis of the area to be developed that creates a more precise measurement of both the horizontal extent of the floodplain area and the vertical elevation of the floodplain as it relates to existing structures. Though the current floodplain location and elevations are based on the best available data, more detailed hydrologic analysis, to provide a clearer definition of the flood area and set minimum floor elevations, will occur at a later phase.



1964 Flood



1996 Flood



Approximate location of 1996 flood boundary on the site.

# habitat restoration targets



Restoring the site's riverbank will help to enhance Pacific lamprey habitat by providing resting places on their migration upstream

The following targets were established by the Partners to guide habitat restoration activities. These targets represent the most regionally rare and threatened habitat types present at the site, and emphasize the importance of protecting water quality. They are designed to capture the site's potential array of native biodiversity and reflect local and regional conservation goals.

## Riparian Habitat

Riparian habitats are defined as a conservation priority in the Oregon Conservation Strategy, Willamette Valley-Puget Trough Ecoregional Assessment, Willamette Subbasin Plan, and 'Partners in Flight Conservation Strategy' for landbirds in lowlands and valleys of western Oregon and Washington. Rocky outcroppings (balds and bluffs) are a habitat feature along the Willamette River, and are listed as a specialized and local habitat for the Willamette Valley ecoregion in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. These habitats are critical for many species including red-legged frogs, salamanders, herons, migratory songbirds, water voles, weasels, native turtles and pollinators.

## Native Fish Habitat

Pacific Lamprey, steelhead and salmon species are important for cultural and subsistence purposes. In the vicinity of Willamette Falls, a large variety of native fish species occur, including at least six federally listed threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Anadromous fish present in the Willamette River include: spring and fall run Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), summer and winter steelhead (*O. mykiss*), coastal cutthroat trout (*O. clarkia*), Coho salmon (*O. kisutch*), white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*), Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). These fish are listed as conservation priorities in numerous state and multistate conservation plans, including Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Lower Columbia River Conservation & Recovery Plan for Oregon Populations of Salmon & Steelhead and the Northwest Power Planning Council's Willamette Subbasin Plan. They are also addressed in The Intertwine's *Regional Conservation Strategy*.

## Water Quality

The Willamette River is identified under the Clean Water Act for violations of water quality standards including temperature, bacteria, and mercury. Urban runoff pollutes the river, as do localized pollution issues, including many properties along the river with contaminated soils from past and present industry. The Willamette River's water quality has recently improved through expensive but effective restoration and remediation efforts. Addressing water quality under redevelopment is a vital part of the strategy to restore the Willamette River.

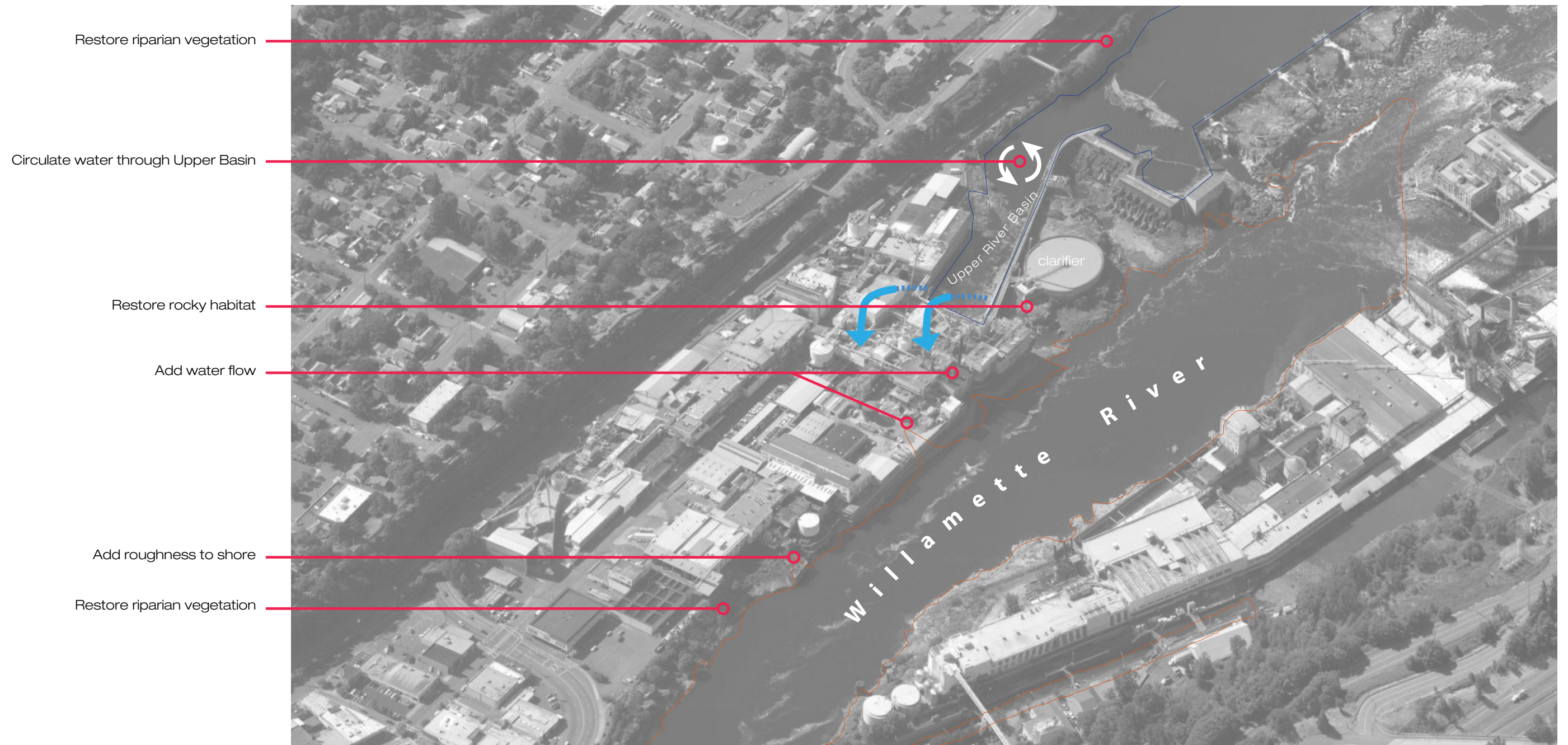


# habitat opportunities

This diagram summarizes key strategies proposed for habitat restoration on site. The riverbank vegetation enhancement and shoreline re-shaping should be coordinated with construction of the Riverwalk. Removal of the clarifier could restore rocky habitat between the PGE dam and the river. Adding water flow through the site and improving Upper Basin water circulation is a concept that will require further study and coordination with the design of future public space on this site.



Oregon Sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) is a hardy native plant well-suited to restoration of rocky basalt outcroppings.







Willamette Narrows is a nearby Metro property upstream from Willamette Falls, with ongoing restoration activities. It features similar rocky habitats that could be replicated at the Falls.



Protected cliff-top vernal pools on the Victoria, BC waterfront. The clarifier area could be restored with similar vernal pools, creating important habitat.



A re-engineered and re-naturalized riverbank at the South Waterfront Greenway in Portland creates new habitat alongside a new regional trail.



A vision for the re-connection of Main Street through the mill site, with mixed-use development and revitalized historic structures facing a walkable, multi-modal streetscape.

# IV. economic redevelopment

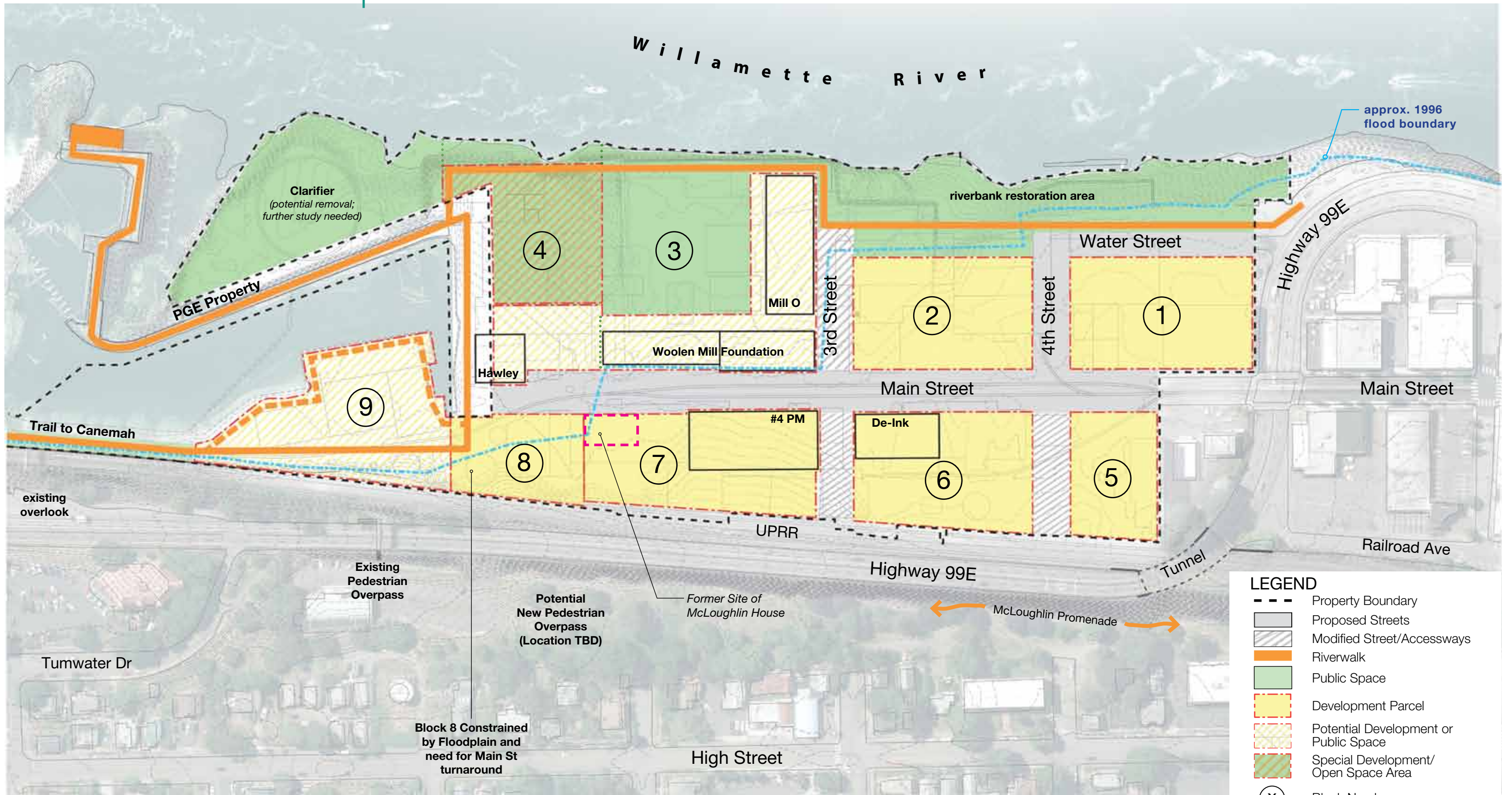
Economic development will be a key outcome of Willamette Falls redevelopment. The Willamette Falls property will continue a tradition of economic vitality along the riverfront, where mills thrived for more than a century. The 175 jobs lost when the Blue Heron Paper Company closed can be recovered over time as redevelopment proceeds and new uses populate the site. Returning part of the site to private developers, the partners will ensure the transformation supports Oregon City's vision for the future and reinvigorates the downtown as a hub of employment, shopping, business and tourism.

The master plan for Willamette Falls creates a framework that balances certainty and flexibility. It encourages and enables revitalization of the site, organizes and defines needed public investment in the site and removes barriers to private redevelopment. Collectively, these changes to the site will elevate it into a regional amenity and a four-season destination location, stimulate private investment and job creation, improve habitat, and honor the unique heritage of the place. The goal is to create a new market and an impetus for new development across Oregon City and the greater region.

This section describes the framework that forms the simple structure for the regulatory master plan document. Also included are several demonstrations of how this framework can be implemented to honor the site's character and create an economically thriving redevelopment district. The pages that follow propose a strategy for creating a sustainable development that is founded on the realities of the real estate market and development economics.

**“Ensure people from all walks of life and cultures are welcome here for work and play.”**  
*public comment*

# framework plan



**LEGEND**

- Property Boundary
- Proposed Streets
- Modified Street/Accessways
- Riverwalk
- Public Space
- Development Parcel
- Potential Development or Public Space
- Special Development/ Open Space Area
- X Block Number
- 0 75 150



## framework master plan

The framework master plan forms the basis of this site's regulatory master plan document, which creates a flexible structure for redevelopment and land use review, while addressing the public's desire for access, historic interpretation and restored habitat. The framework master plan revamps regulations to encourage revitalization of the site. It creates a new, mixed-use Willamette Falls Downtown zone to replace industrial zoning and provides a plan for anticipated patterns of development. The master plan locates areas for re-development, public space, streets, habitat restoration, and public paths and trails. Development standards for the area and design guidelines for future buildings are part of the plan, as well as a clear process for future builders to follow when they propose specific projects. Existing protections for flood zones, natural resources, geologic stability, and the Willamette River Greenway remain in place.

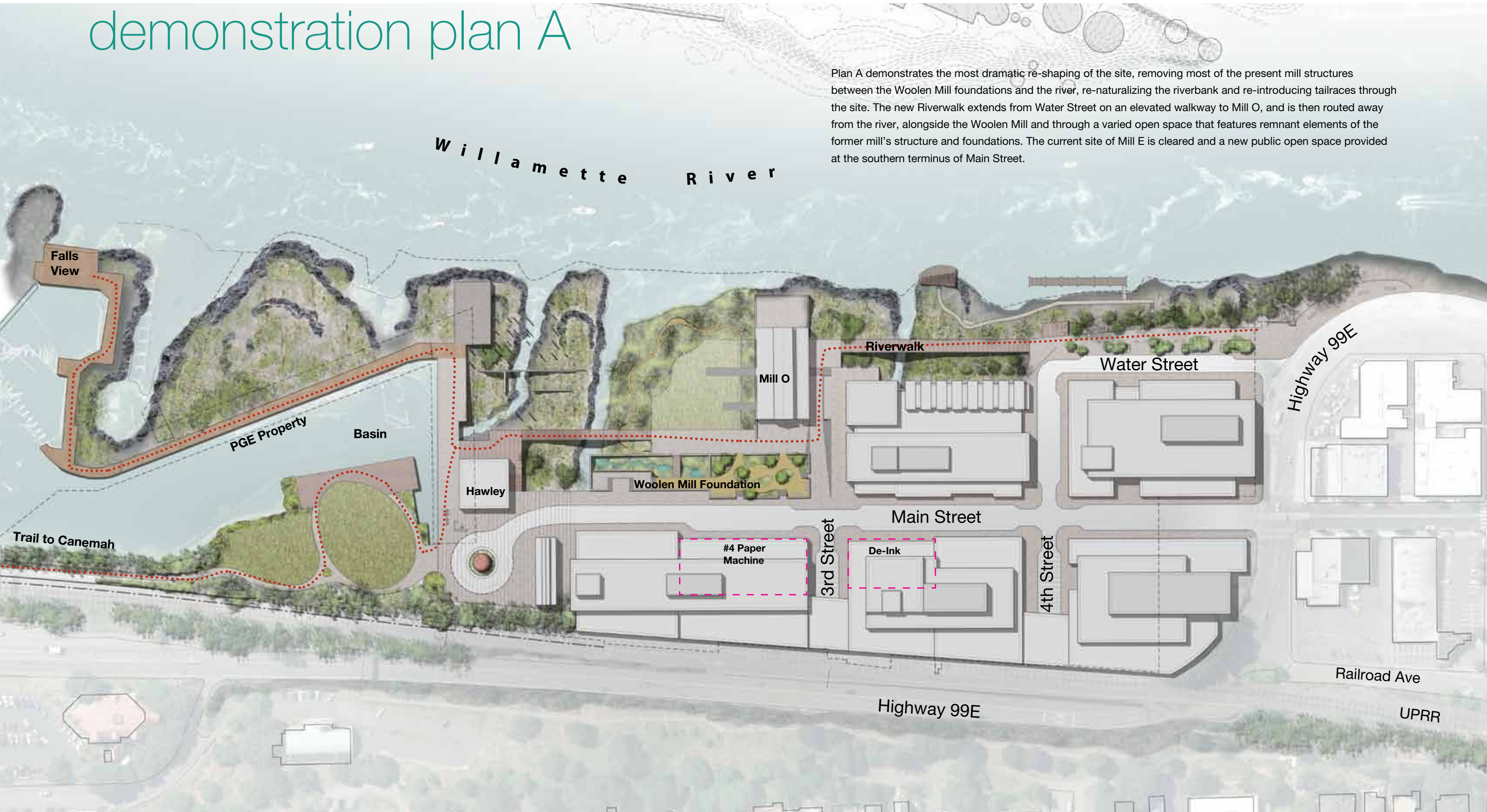
## demonstration plans

The framework master plan does not explicitly design public spaces, in particular the dramatic new public space proposed for Blocks 3 and 4 along the Willamette riverfront. The following pages present four demonstration plans, which represent just a few of the many options possible for the site's public realm, attempting to encapsulate the vision for the future of this property presented in this report. These plans also provide the public with an illustrative sense of the dramatic potential for transformation at Willamette Falls.

Mark Gamba, 2013

# demonstration plan A

Plan A demonstrates the most dramatic re-shaping of the site, removing most of the present mill structures between the Woolen Mill foundations and the river, re-naturalizing the riverbank and re-introducing tailraces through the site. The new Riverwalk extends from Water Street on an elevated walkway to Mill O, and is then routed away from the river, alongside the Woolen Mill and through a varied open space that features remnant elements of the former mill's structure and foundations. The current site of Mill E is cleared and a new public open space provided at the southern terminus of Main Street.



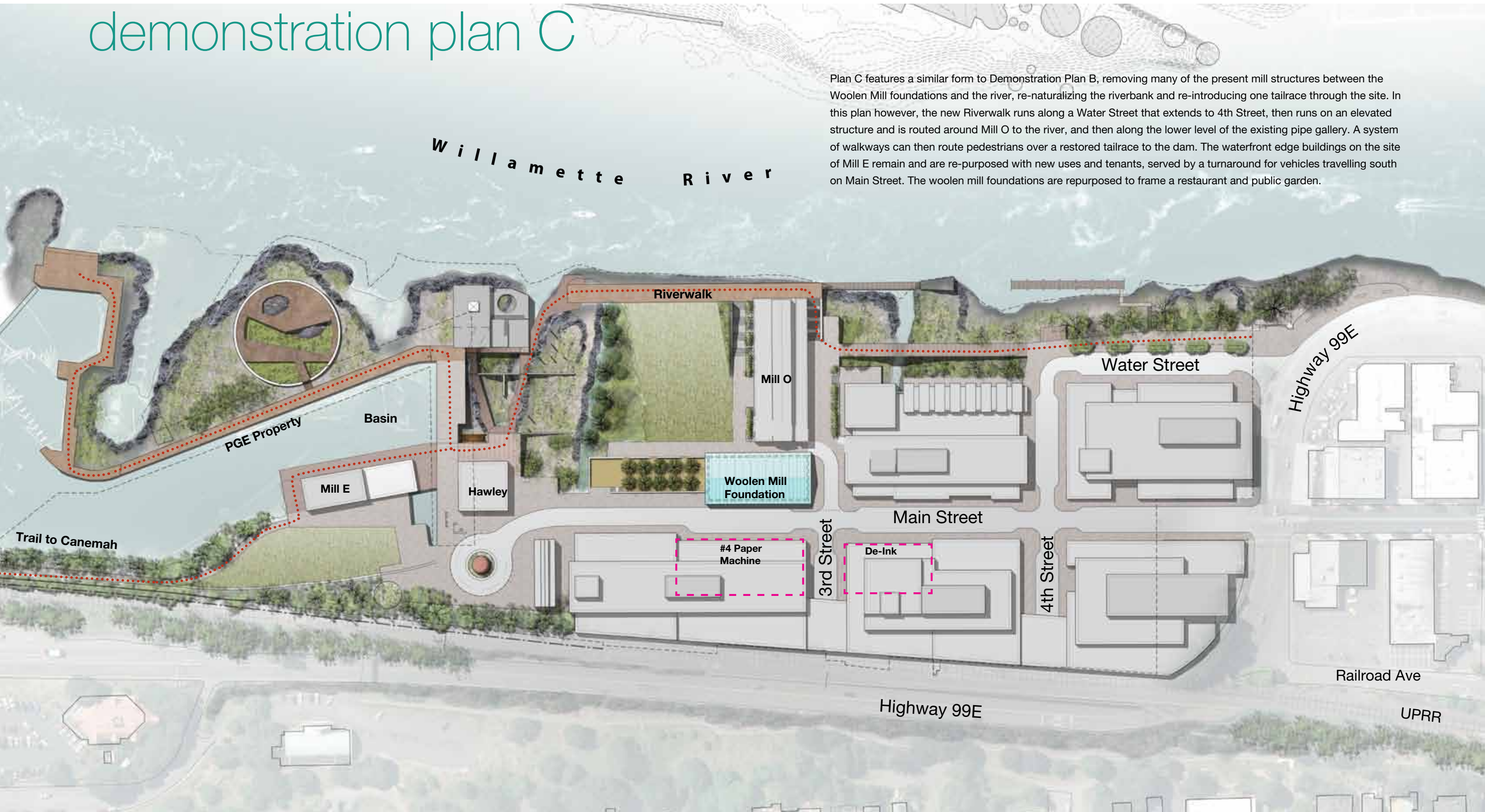
# demonstration plan B

Plan B still demonstrates a significant re-shaping of the site, removing many of the present mill structures between the Woolen Mill foundations and the river, re-naturalizing the riverbank and re-introducing one tailrace through the site. The new Riverwalk runs along a Water Street that extends to 3rd St, and is then routed around Mill O to the river, along the top of the existing pipe gallery. A system of walkways then take visitors around a restored tailrace and through #1 Paper Machine to the dam. The current buildings on the site of Mill E remain and are re-purposed with new uses and tenants, served by a turnaround for vehicles travelling south on Main Street. A new hotel is proposed, which can incorporate the old stone foundations of the woolen mill.



# demonstration plan C

Plan C features a similar form to Demonstration Plan B, removing many of the present mill structures between the Woolen Mill foundations and the river, re-naturalizing the riverbank and re-introducing one tailrace through the site. In this plan however, the new Riverwalk runs along a Water Street that extends to 4th Street, then runs on an elevated structure and is routed around Mill O to the river, and then along the lower level of the existing pipe gallery. A system of walkways can then route pedestrians over a restored tailrace to the dam. The waterfront edge buildings on the site of Mill E remain and are re-purposed with new uses and tenants, served by a turnaround for vehicles travelling south on Main Street. The woolen mill foundations are repurposed to frame a restaurant and public garden.





# demonstration plan D

Plan D is a hybrid of the previous three plans, removing some of the present mill structures between the Woolen Mill foundations and the river, re-naturalizing the riverbank and re-introducing one tailrace through the site. In this plan however, the new Riverwalk runs along a Water Street that extends to 4th Street, then runs on an elevated structure and is routed around Mill O to the river, and then along a path that is built on the retaining wall of the existing pipe gallery. A public walkway then routes pedestrians over a restored tailrace and around a future redevelopment of Mill G and Mill H, to the dam. The waterfront edge buildings on the site of Mill E remain and are re-purposed with new uses and tenants, served by a turnaround for vehicles travelling south on Main Street. The woolen mill foundations are built into the foundation or lower level of a new structure.



# public space options



**Demonstration Plan A** features the most dramatic re-shaping of the riverbank, with deep incisions into the former mill property to restore the channels of former tailraces that in turn were alterations of former natural channels in a complex waterfall. These restored tailraces could flow with water routed from the Basin but would not be alternative salmon spawning routes. The newly roughened riverbank is planted with native, flood-resistant species in pockets within the basalt rock. Soft surface pedestrian trails wind along the riverbank. At the top of the bank, an open lawn provides a flexible, informal gathering space available to people spilling out of a walled garden within the foundations of the old Woolen Mill.

**Demonstration Plan D** proposes a similar riverbank restoration, but maintains a Riverwalk close to the river's edge, using the retaining wall of the Pipe Gallery as foundation.

**Demonstration Plan B** retains the existing flat expanse between Mill O and Mill G, currently an open work yard at the mill site. Several shed structures are removed and the open area is replaced with a large lawn shaded at its edges with trees. Along the riverbank, the existing pipe gallery remains and the roof is repurposed as part of the Riverwalk with benches and lighting to make it an inviting space used throughout the day and into the evening. At the southern edge of the lawn, a restored tailrace is displayed, with an elevated walk above allowing visitors to view the myriad support columns from the removed mill buildings above in a 'garden of industrial archaeology.'

**Demonstration Plan C** retains the lower level of the concrete pipe gallery as the Riverwalk runs closer to the water's edge. Several shed structures are removed and the resulting open area south of Mill O is replaced with a large lawn shaded at its edges with trees. The large amounts of fill that currently support the pipe gallery are removed and the lawn slopes gently down to the walkway. At the southern edge of this lawn, some restoration of the former tailraces could be achieved, with a walkway winding through the remaining support columns from the removed mill buildings above.

# architectural opportunities



Mark Gamba, 2012

Many of the concrete mill structures have massive concrete foundation systems with interesting spatial qualities that inspire reuse.



In addition to the massive concrete column and beam mill structures, wood framed buildings exist on site with exposed wood columns, beams, and roof trusses. A renovated Mill O could be a unique space with distinct character.



Mark Gamba, 2012

Industrial building forms reflect original design beneath decades of alterations. These facades could remain while new development occurs behind them.



Even after the salvaging of materials, many of the existing mill structures retain an authentic industrial character and scale, with simple concrete forms, and can be repurposed.



There are a number of industrial relics on site with interpretive and aesthetic value.



Expansive and flexible interior volume within the No. 4 Paper Machine Building.

McLoughlin Promenade

US 99E

RAIL

PARKING

PARKING

PARKING

PARKING

OFFICE

OFFICE

OFFICE

OFFICE

RETAIL

MAIN STREET



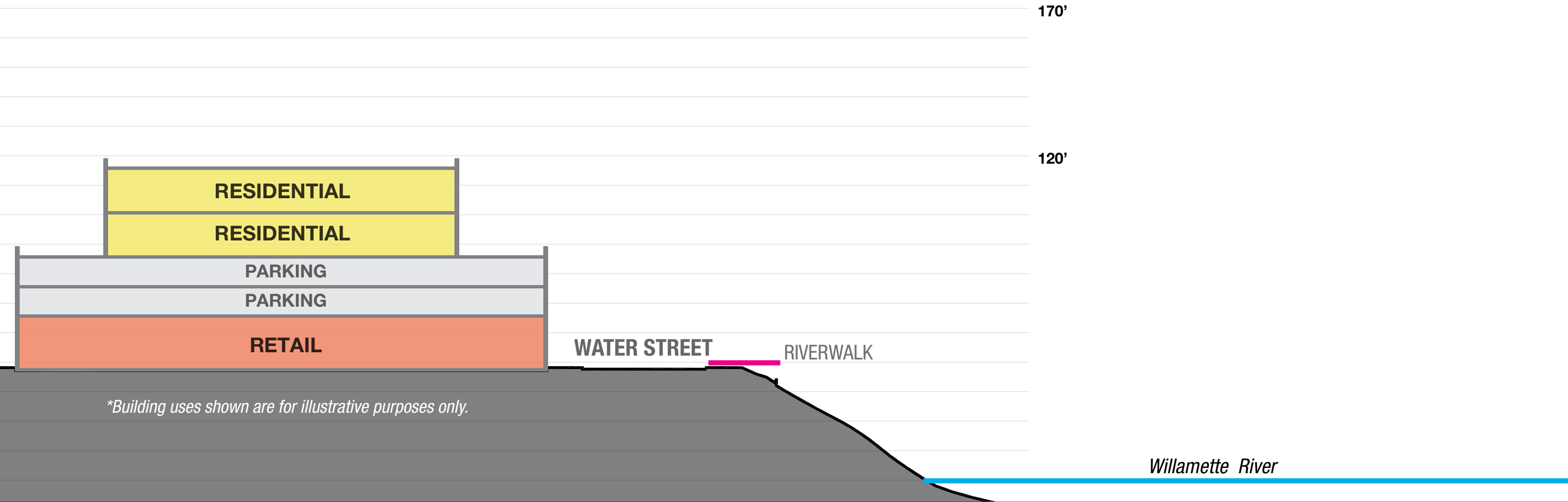
Lake View Village in Lake Oswego features 3 levels of public/private above-ground parking, hidden behind a liner of active, pedestrian-friendly mixed use.

Bing, 2014

#### ON-SITE PARKING STRATEGY

Each development block in the Willamette Falls District is sized to park itself, that is, accommodate its own parking, without the need for off-site spaces. Oregon City's parking rules are flexible, both in terms of the location and amount of parking. Parking can be located on each block, or it can be consolidated in the form of a shared garage. Because the site is part of the downtown parking district, minimum space requirements may be reduced by up to 50%. The regulatory Master Plan envisions that parking will occur in structures at the back of new buildings, or on their upper stories. Underground parking is highly unlikely because the site is located on solid basalt rock. This diagram illustrates, in schematic form, how structures could be integrated into the site while still supporting an active streetscape. Parking supply at full build out of the site is estimated at 1,150 spaces off-street, and 85 spaces on-street.

# development blocks & parking



*\*Building uses shown are for illustrative purposes only.*

## OFF-SITE PARKING STRATEGY

This site will be considered integral to the existing downtown and McLoughlin Neighborhood. A Transportation Demand Management approach that works to utilize and improve the existing transportation network and re-stitch the site back into the urban framework should be the guiding approach and will be needed to redevelop the site to its full potential. The development of housing, employment and retail to the existing downtown will have a substantial effect on the community's approach to multi-modal living. Investing in the Riverwalk and the 99E/Promenade overcrossing as well as working with Main Street Oregon City and the City on innovative parking strategies for off-peak visitor parking will be an essential part of the site's success.



# Mill District, Minneapolis, MN

## Project Facts:

- Over 80 buildings rehabilitated over the past 25 years
- Over 1,250 housing units (hundreds more planned)
- 1,000,000 sq. ft of commercial space
- 512 hotel rooms
- Over 2,000 permanent jobs, hundreds of construction jobs
- \$475 million in tax revenue
- Strategic public investments (multiple sources) of \$338 million
- Leveraged private/nonprofit investment of about \$1.9 billion

## Lessons learned:

- Patience and persistence are mandatory
- Respect the market
- Parks, trails and amenities are important development tools
- Partners are vital, and partnerships need nurturing
- Areas in transition are intimidating to potential investors

*(Source, Minneapolis CPED, 2012)*

# economic redevelopment examples



example:  
Pearl District, Portland

This new mixed-use building in Portland's Pearl District was designed to fit the context of historic brick warehouses.



example:  
Chicago Riverwalk

The Chicago Riverwalk has been funded by a variety of sources, including tax-increment financing, federal funds and loans from the U.S. Department of Transportation.



example:  
Belmont Dairy, Portland

These before and after images show the dramatic transformation and preservation of the Belmont Dairy in Portland.

# market analysis

While market fundamentals in downtown Oregon City are improving, they are not yet strong enough to overcome the development challenges on the site without assistance. Developing a high quality urban mixed-use project on the site, will be a challenge given that no current market comparables for such development exist in Oregon City today. In order to mitigate this risk and successfully attract new private development, Oregon City and its public partners must continue to pursue effective public-private partnerships and deliver public amenities at the site, providing a more stable environment for private investment. As described later in this section, investment in the Riverwalk is a critical first step in transforming the site.

## Clackamas County Economic Landscape

Clackamas County Business & Economic Redevelopment have focused on conveying the current economic forces that are driving the Clackamas County local economy by identifying the following strategies as keys to increasing the jobs-to-housing ratio:

- Recruiting traded sector firms to the site who sell products and services outside of the region.
- Identifying businesses who could benefit from the recent nearby investment in dark fiber broadband infrastructure.
- Attracting potential industries; creative class (example: software development), professional business services. For example, creative firms in the film and media production or business services industries could be attracted by the site's location next to Willamette Falls and Oregon City's historic downtown.
- Siting industries who pay higher than average wages, thus spending those wages in the local economy, creating an "induced" effect.

## Opportunities

The site is adjacent to Oregon City's downtown and to Willamette Falls, and offers spectacular views of the landmark feature. The site possesses a number of key opportunities and unique features, including:

- Demonstrated support of public agency partners in planning for development of the site and removing key challenges and barriers to future development activity
- Unique setting that can drive interest and demand for new development and provide a broad, regional pull
- Potential to capitalize on Willamette Falls and associated cultural history (Native Americans, Oregon Trail, early Oregon history, etc.) to drive tourism interest at the site and in downtown Oregon City
- Location adjacent to downtown Oregon City, with the potential to leverage recent public and private investment in downtown and along the Willamette River riverfront
- Close proximity to regional highways and major population centers, including Portland
- Existing industrial buildings with potential for adaptive re-use, and could create a unique development with its own sense of place

## Challenges

Future development efforts on the site will encounter challenges associated with the existing structures on the site. These challenges likely will increase the costs of development (relative to development on a greenfield or urban infill on clean, vacant parcels), and could restrict the options for future use.

These specific challenges include:

- Inadequate infrastructure, site preparation issues, potential contamination issues, floodplain restrictions (both practical and regulatory), and building demolition or reuse options, all of which may significantly increase development costs and limit overall development potential for the site
- Limited transportation access, which currently restricts the total development capacity of the site
- Current gap between existing rents and values in the Oregon City area and development costs
- Lack of direct market comparables for higher density (higher cost) development in Oregon City

This vision document and the framework master plan lay out specific strategies and solutions that leverage opportunities and mitigate challenges in order to encourage successful redevelopment of the site.

## Development Approach

Given the site's outstanding amenity value, it is clear that medium density mixed-use development (residential, retail, office/flex space, hotel and visitor facilities), including significant public open space and river access, would be the most appropriate form of development to pursue. Given the likely development costs on the site, development types that result in lower overall value (such as turn-key industrial, office or industrial park, or an entirely open space development program) would not be successful without very significant public sector support.

A cost-effective approach to developing the site relies on several factors, including:

- Addressing the gap between current market rents and values and actual development costs for higher density urban development on the site through moving forward with a landmark, highly visible public project (the Riverwalk) to attract regional attention and demand
- Identifying and implementing higher-density development options that fit with the existing business district
- Aligning regulatory restrictions, partnerships, and regional demand sources to take full advantage of natural and historical features at the study site while maximizing revenues and minimizing costs
- Understanding the relationship between public investment in infrastructure, parks, and public access and how this investment can help leverage significant private interest and investment
- Identifying a location or strategies for adequate parking facilities to support the development uses



New construction at Evergreen Brickworks, a community center and non-profit organization in Toronto, Canada.



Urban Outfitters employs 3300 people at their headquarters at Philadelphia's Navy Yard.



# economic benefits



Tech Offices



Apparel and other light industrial uses



Mixed-use

The master plan and the vision for Willamette Falls call for transformative action. Changes to the site enabled by the master plan and public actions taken to achieve the vision will benefit the entire region and its economy, transform the site into a regional amenity and a four-season destination, stimulate private investment and job creation, improve habitat, and honor the unique heritage of the place. The plan creates a regulatory framework that balances certainty and flexibility to encourage private investment on the site, removing regulatory and other barriers to redevelopment. Site redevelopment will create a new market and an impetus for new development across Oregon City and the greater region.

The benefits of redevelopment at the site are significant, and could result in the following gross economic benefits:

- During construction: A total of about 1,460 new jobs, including direct construction jobs, indirect (business-to-business) jobs, and induced jobs created from increased household spending
- Once construction ends: A total of about 1,480 permanent full-time equivalent positions, including people with jobs at the site (direct jobs) and in businesses that support the people and businesses that are located at the site (indirect and induced jobs)
- \$2.3 Million in estimated annual tax revenue, benefitting the City of Oregon City, Clackamas County, school districts, and others
- \$14 Million in estimated annual spending from visitors arriving from outside of the Portland region

Additional benefits are less quantifiable, but are equally important to Oregon City and Clackamas County's ongoing economic development efforts. Redevelopment of the site transforms Oregon City's downtown into an attraction that is important at the national level, bringing new energy and more people to downtown Oregon City's existing businesses, and creating a completely unique place that all can enjoy.

Achieving this benefit will require coordinated public action. The market analysis conducted as part of the planning process found that market fundamentals (achievable rents, vacancies, demographic characteristics) in the area surrounding the site are improving. However, these market conditions are not strong enough to overcome site development challenges without concurrent public investment in key public features that maximize the site's value and provide broad public benefit. Redevelopment must be supported with public space and river access if market challenges are to be overcome.

Given these findings, public investments in high quality public space and access to the site's major amenities (the river and the falls) are a critical first step in redeveloping the site. These actions will be necessary to begin the transformation of the site and increase its attractiveness for private investment.

The proposed Riverwalk has the potential to transform the site, attract private investment and meet all of the project's core values. In addition to providing much-needed public access to the River and Willamette Falls, it will dramatically change public and market perception of the site and increase private investment interest. This investment will have direct City, County, and Regional economic benefits.

Investment in the Riverwalk will increase private development interest by providing a dramatically transformed image of the site. It will also remove some of the uncertainty regarding riverfront development regulations and exactions as well as the inherent challenges in building within the floodplain. Once the Riverwalk is built, it will also be constantly providing a built-in 'captive' audience for future businesses on the site and nearby, which will further increase the competitive advantages of the site.

# redevelopment potential

## development assumptions

The proposed zoning for this site will accommodate a broad range of potential uses. To understand the range of economically viable possibilities for the site, the following assumptions have been established to underpin the various development scenarios that follow:

- Parking ratios are based on what the market will bear and not what current code allows.
- Building efficiency for most uses will determine the net usable/rentable area.
- Job creation rates reflect both permanent uses on the site as well as construction activity
- Ending development values are based on rent/lease/sale assumptions. Depending on the use, there also may be assumptions made about:
  - Rental rates
  - Occupancy
  - Stabilization Period
  - Cap Rates
  - Operating Expenses

These assumptions are based on an understanding of the current and projected real estate market for the Blue Heron site.



## development scenarios

Three different development scenarios were analyzed utilizing the basic assumptions outlined at left. The rezoning of the property is intended to provide a flexible approach to future use of the property. The intent of the scenarios is not to arrive at a specific outcome in terms of the location and types of uses on the property, but rather to illustrate the range of possibilities for the site and understand how various scenarios may play out over time. **These scenarios are not specifically linked to the Demonstration Plans shown earlier in this document**, but those plans display the same generic building outlines, within which all of the following scenarios could be implemented.

These scenarios are not mutually exclusive, and it is likely that elements of each could be matched to create a preferred development plan. Each scenario incorporates the reuse of the four primary historic structures identified on the development framework plans (Mill O, Hawley Building, #4 Paper Machine and De-Ink).

**Scenario 1 – Residential/Mixed Use Emphasis** – This scenario maximizes the amount of residential development on site, including market rate apartments, condominiums, and senior housing. Retail emphasis is on neighborhood-serving retail and services. Flex office and craft industrial is limited to the southern portion of the site, utilizing historic structures related to the open space on Blocks 3 and 4. This scenario would produce:

- 535 – 700 New Residential Units (Apartments, Condominiums, Senior Living)
- 100,000 – 130,000 SF of new office/flex office/craft industrial space
- 50,000 SF of new neighborhood-serving retail
- 35,000 SF Grocery Store
- 670,000 – 835,000 Gross Square Feet of new development (not including structured parking)
- \$140M - \$220M estimated ending market value
- 600 – 735 Permanent jobs (full-time equivalent)
- 920 – 1,140 Construction jobs (full-time equivalent)

**Scenario 2 – Commercial/Employment Emphasis** – This scenario provides additional space for employment activity, primarily by expanding the flex-office, craft industrial and office uses into the historic buildings on the site. A limited service/business oriented hotel is included, and open space on blocks 3 and 4 continue to be emphasized. This scenario would produce:

- 290 - 350 New Residential Units (Apartments)
- 200,000 – 240,000 SF of new office/flex office/craft industrial space
- 50,000 SF of new neighborhood-serving retail
- 35,000 SF Grocery Store
- 150 – 200 Room Limited Service Hotel (Business)
- 640,000 – 770,000 Gross Square Feet new development (not including structured parking)
- \$115M - \$185M estimated ending market value
- 1,080 – 1,270 Permanent jobs (full-time equivalent)
- 860 – 1,040 Construction jobs (full-time equivalent)

**Scenario 3 – Visitor Emphasis** – This scenario assumes a greater emphasis on the site as a destination for visitors from across the region as well as out-of-state tourists. Increased retail along Main Street, a hotel on Block 3, and inclusion of craft industrial uses within historic buildings all reinforce the visitor emphasis. Block 9 would be open space, offsetting the placement of the hotel on Block 3. This scenario would produce:

- 390 - 490 New Residential Units (Apartments, Condominiums)
- 145,000 – 170,000 SF of new flex office/craft industrial space
- 70,000 SF of new neighborhood-serving and destination retail
- 18,000 SF Grocery Store
- 120 - 150 Room Limited Service Hotel (Visitor)
- 695,000 – 835,000 Gross Square Feet new development (not including structured parking)
- \$135M - \$215M estimated ending market value
- 850 – 965 Permanent jobs (full-time equivalent)
- 940 – 1,140 Construction jobs (full-time equivalent)

## development scenarios (cont.)

**Overall Scenario Summary** – Looking at the three scenarios as a whole, we can expect that development at the site will fall within the following ranges:

- 290 - 700 New Residential Units (Apartments, Condominiums, Senior Living)
- 100,000 – 240,000 SF of new office/flex office/craft industrial space
- 50,000 - 70,000 SF of new neighborhood-serving and destination retail
- 18,000 – 35,000 SF Grocery Store
- 120 - 200 Room Limited Service Hotel
- 640,000 – 835,000 Gross Square Feet new development (not including structured parking)
- \$115M - \$220M estimated ending market value
- 600 – 1,270 Permanent jobs (full-time equivalent)
- 920 – 1,140 Construction jobs (full-time equivalent)

## general considerations

1. Approximately 1000 – 1150 parking spaces are required to support the various development scenarios. This number may increase if additional visitor/public parking is desired (e.g., for Falls access), or may be decreased if effective shared parking arrangements can be identified.
2. Visitor parking needs should be identified and incorporated into the overall site planning effort. As part of this analysis, shared parking opportunities could reduce the overall amount of parking on site and provide opportunities for public parking resources to catalyze redevelopment activity.
3. Floor Area Ratios (FAR) vary greatly, due in part to some large parcel areas (e.g., Blocks 3, 4 and 9). Looking at the more typical blocks (e.g., Blocks 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7), FARs range from 0.7 to 4.2, based on net developable acreage. If zoning language is written to limit FAR based on net developable acreage, then a maximum FAR of 4.0 is appropriate, allowing for some ability to transfer FAR between sites up to a 5.0 FAR maximum. FARs for the site do not currently include areas of above grade structured parking, which, if included, would raise the FAR ranges for the property.
4. Building heights will also vary, depending on the intensity of development or whether historic buildings are reused/incorporated within the development. A range of heights between 2 and 7 stories would be appropriate and accommodate the variety of uses proposed for the site. This height would be consistent with existing structures on the site, remain below the elevation of the bluff, and avoid additional development costs associated with high-rise development standards.



The Columbus, Georgia Riverwalk provides a continuous waterfront connection between a restored mill complex and new office buildings and parking.



The Tennessee Riverwalk in Chattanooga resulted in impressive economic benefits. Three hundred new housing units have been built, with an additional 250 units under construction. Tourism increased 73% between 1995 and 2000, and new businesses in the vicinity of the Tennessee Aquarium increased from 33 to 128 since the development project began. The city has since experienced a 127% increase in property values.



# realizing the vision

Redeveloping the land along Willamette Falls will create both short-term construction jobs and permanent, full-time positions – as well as millions of dollars every year in tax revenue and visitor spending. Other benefits are harder to quantify, but just as important to Oregon City and Clackamas County’s ongoing economic development efforts. Redevelopment can transform Oregon City’s downtown into a national-caliber destination, infusing a strong core with new energy, more people and a unique sense of place.

Making the most of this opportunity will require significant, coordinated public action from local, regional, state and federal sources. A critical “big” first step: creating quality public open spaces that let people experience the Willamette River and Willamette Falls. Once Oregonians and visitors begin connecting with the Falls, it will be realistic to attract private investment — and all the benefits that come along with it.

**“Go big. Or go home.”**

*developer quoted at public event*

# action & investment

Creating an amenity that respects the nationally-significant history and context of the site will require coordinated public action from local, regional, state, and federal sources. The investments that are needed, for public access, infrastructure upgrades, public space and redevelopment, are generally described in the figure below.

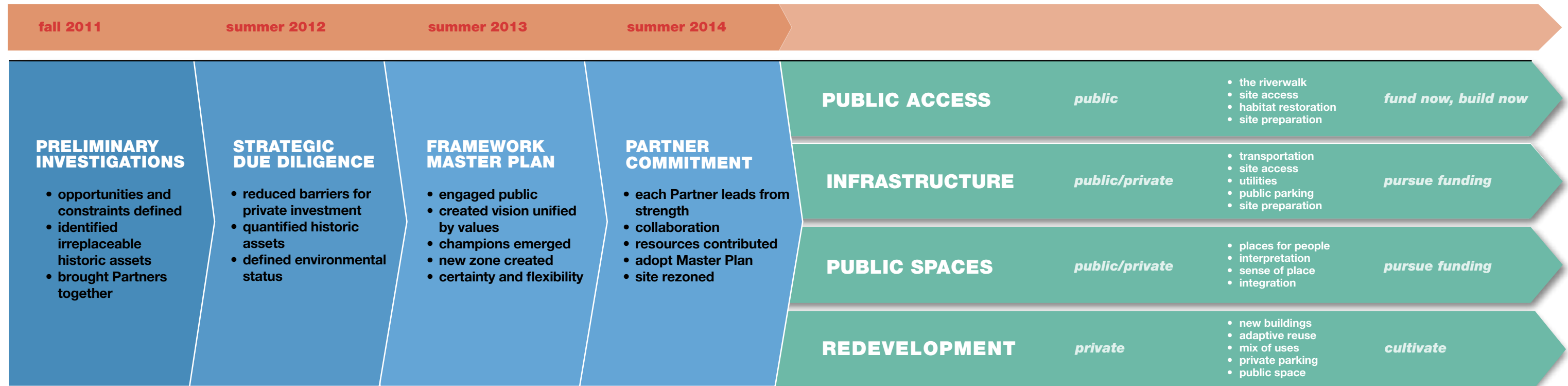
Public access along the waterfront and to Willamette Falls is the first and most important step in implementation. Once in place, the Riverwalk will create certainty for potential private investors regarding the public commitment to the site's redevelopment. It will also bring visitors to the site and generate additional political energy and momentum for continued implementation of the master plan.

A wide variety of funding sources have been identified to support the initial steps necessary to create this access. Partners will be asked to contribute to the design and engineering of the Riverwalk, and assist with permitting. Partners are also actively working to identify and secure additional funding for construction of the Riverwalk.

Investments in creating high-quality, development-supportive public space will be another important implementation step. These investments create a sense of place, and integrate development blocks with the Riverwalk. As design and engineering of the public access to the falls continues, partners will continue to seek additional public and foundation sources for funding public space investments.

The remaining implementation steps should occur as co-investments with private partners that are invested in redeveloping the site in alignment with the vision described in this document. Some components of the infrastructure (such as public parking and site access) support public access to the site for visitors, and should be funded with public money. Others, such as road access to private parking and some streetscape improvements, directly support the private investment, and as such should be funded in coordination with a developer or property owner whose plans meet the public goals for the site.

Creating a positive environment for private investment will require transformation of the site, both physically and in the way this complex site is perceived. This transformation begins with securing financing for all levels of public investment on public access along the river and to the falls, which will display the commitment needed by the private sector.



# cost projections

Redevelopment activity at the site, as noted earlier in this document, will require public-private partnerships to help deliver key site development improvements. As part of evaluating the viability of potential public investment at the site, order of magnitude costs have been calculated for the following development-supportive public infrastructure projects:

## Cost Projections (2014) for Selected Public Project Categories

RIVERWALK	
Riverwalk Trail (incl habitat restoration)	\$17-\$20 million
Canemah Trail	\$6-\$7 million
Dam Walkway	\$2.5-\$3 million
Clarifier Removal	\$1-\$2 million
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$26 - \$32 million</b>

PUBLIC SPACE (Blocks 3&4)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15-\$18 million</b>

MILL E IMPROVEMENTS*	
Alternative 1	\$9-\$12 million
Alternative 2	\$7-\$8 million
Alternative 3	\$4-\$5 million

\* Note: Mill E projections include some private redevelopment costs.

STREETS (Including Utilities)	
Water Ave and Hwy 99 Intersection	\$1.1 - \$1.5 million
4th Street	\$700k - \$1 million
Main Street between 5th & 4th (incl intersection)	\$1.8 - \$2.2 million
3rd Street	\$800k - \$1 million
Main Street between 4th & Hawley Building	\$4.8 - \$5.2 million
Main Street Turnaround/Plaza	\$2 - \$2.5 million
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11 - \$13 million</b>

OFF-SITE TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4.5 - \$6 million</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$65 - \$80 million</b>



The City of Corvallis once turned its back on the Willamette riverfront, but the formerly neglected 1st Street is now thriving with a farmer's market and year-round festivals. New businesses have adapted buildings to face the new riverfront park and trail and a new hotel is under construction.



Percival Landing is a waterfront park in Olympia, built in phases over the last 30 years. The most recent phase, above, replaced a tank farm with open lawn, a waterfront walk and pavilions. With year-round activities, the park has attracted over \$20 million in new investment in nearby blocks.

# phasing

The projects noted are the major public improvements proposed for this site. It is crucial to ensure the continued momentum of the WFLP, so work should begin as soon as feasible, at whatever scale is possible. The high-quality communication and public engagement seen in the early stages of this project must be sustained for future phases and in the periods between.

The following broad categories suggest a measured way of phasing improvements that recognizes certain key projects are pre-requisites before other larger investments are made.

## EARLY ACTIONS

1. As noted earlier in this report, the Riverwalk is a critical first step in providing public access to the Falls and in demonstrating public commitment to creating an amenity that will spur the future redevelopment of the site. The design and engineering of the Riverwalk should include careful consideration of riverbank restoration and of the complex conditions underneath Mill G, as well as Dam restoration and the extension of the trail to Canemah. While the Riverwalk can be established in a prescribed zone along the waterfront, given the complexity of Blocks 3 and 4, the design should potentially include more detailed analysis of the potential for a larger public open space in the area south of Mill O.
2. Vehicular access to the site is another important public investment to make to encourage private investment. The re-establishment of Water Street into the site can be included in the Riverwalk design project, and its construction should be coordinated with the Riverwalk, although it can occur after the trail is built. The Water Street connection should be combined with a new 4th Street and northern segment of Main Street, along with intersection improvements on Hwy 99E.

## LATER ACTIONS

3. Once public access, both via trail and vehicle, has been established on the site, interim surface parking lots may be considered for future development blocks which do not include key historic buildings.
4. The remaining section of Main Street can be contingent on the pace of private development, although it may be important to fully extend the street, with a turnaround in Block 8, for full vehicular access to the site in order to support visitor activities on the site.

## LONG-TERM (or CONTINGENT) ACTIONS

5. Mill E should be considered as a flexible block that can accommodate open space or development, depending on the future site owners. The timing of this project would depend on the intensity of development. Public access to the Upper Basin edge should be ensured.
6. A pedestrian overpass to the site from the McLoughlin Promenade could be coordinated with private redevelopment on Blocks 7 and 8 or could be a stand-alone public project that occurs whenever funding is secured.
7. The second and third phase of improvements to Oregon City's waterfront esplanade (detailed in the 2005 McLoughlin Boulevard Enhancement Plan) are important elements in providing safe access to the Riverwalk but the Riverwalk does not require these improvements in place, in order to proceed.



Past

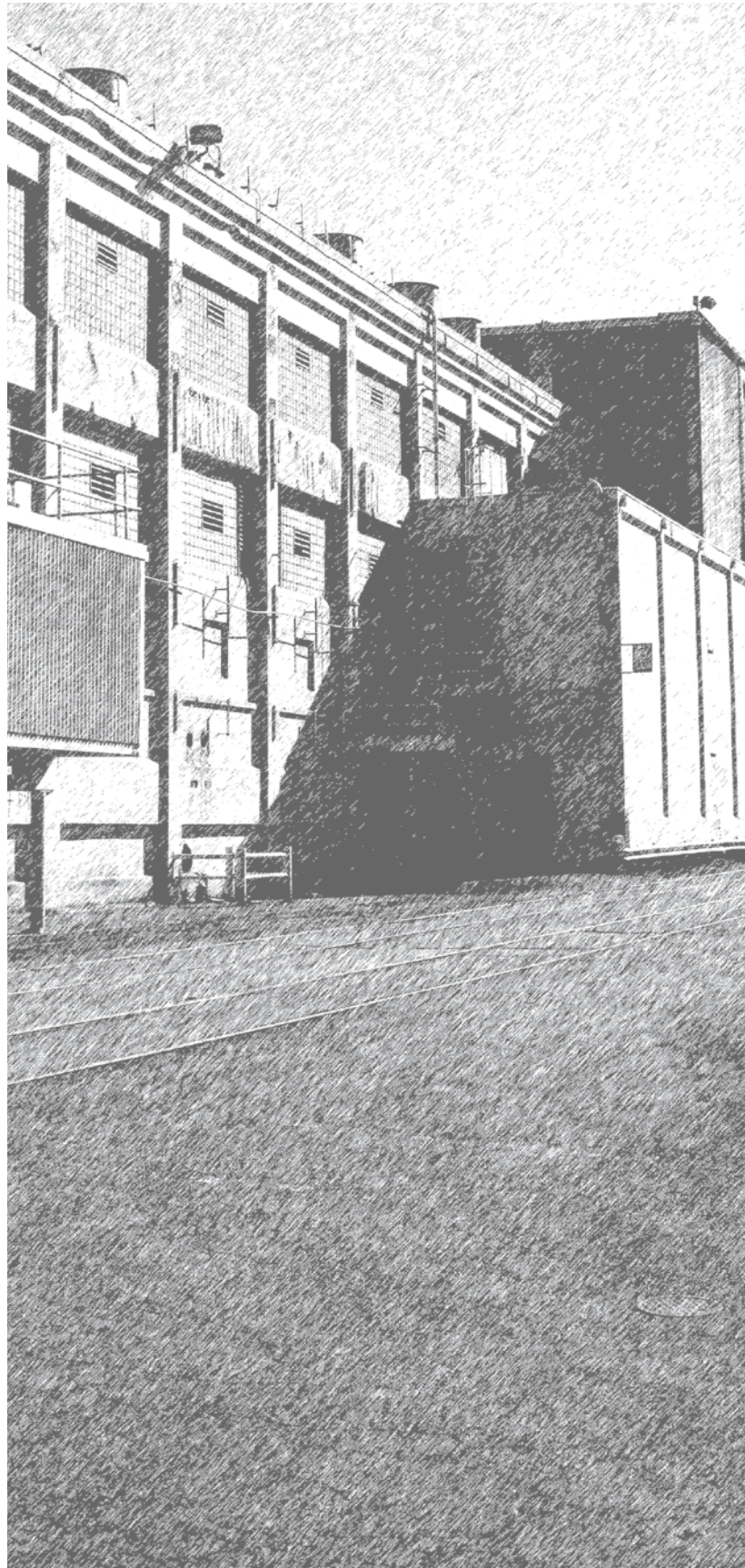


Present



Future





# realizing the vision

The Blue Heron site, despite its stunning location on the Willamette Falls and its historical importance as the founding place of Oregon, presents significant challenges to attracting private investment. The combination of market conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and challenging site conditions are all barriers to private development. However, with careful planning and investment, **these barriers can be overcome.**

Creating a positive environment for investment will require transformation of the site, both physically and in the way the site is perceived. This transformation begins with public investment in securing and improving public access along the river and to the falls. This initial public investment will lead the redevelopment of the site in a number of important ways, including:

- Providing public access to the river and falls, revealing the site's potential to community residents, visitors, and potential investors;
- Removing one of the most significant barriers to redevelopment: the interface of private development activity with environmentally-sensitive and regulated riverfront lands;
- Removing riverfront site structures and mitigating riverfront environmental issues, which will help offset significant private site preparation costs; and
- Drawing additional visitors to the site and downtown Oregon City, providing additional economic momentum for downtown redevelopment.

The ultimate redevelopment of this site will take time, money and well-coordinated public and private support. The Riverwalk is a key strategic investment for attracting private interest in the mill property, creating an opportunity to leverage public investment for economic development returns and a future increase in tax revenues. Fundraising for the Riverwalk is a collaborative effort of the project partners to leverage existing funds such as State commitments of \$5 million, Metro bond money and Oregon City Natural Areas Bond and General Fund dollars.

The Partners are currently actively creating a complete inventory of the potential sources and uses of a wide variety of funds. The strong partnership will allow the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to push forward on pursuing this range of funding and achieving measurable results.

The Rediscovery of the Falls has begun.





# appendices

appendix a: opportunities & constraints summary

appendix b: existing conditions document

appendix c: framework master plan maps & building matrix

appendix d: public engagement summary

appendix e: utility assessment

appendix f: transportation memo and maps

appendix g: detailed cost projections

appendix h: market analysis

appendix i: 2013 site stabilization and building assessment



REDISCOVER  
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FALLS