

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING THE )  
WILLAMETTE FALLS RIVERWALK MASTER )  
PLAN )

RESOLUTION NO. 17-4824

Introduced by Chief Operating Officer Martha  
Bennett in concurrence with Council  
President Tom Hughes

WHEREAS, in May 1995, area voters approved ballot Measure 26-26, authorizing Metro to issue \$135.6 million for bonds for Open Spaces, Parks, and Streams to purchase land in regional target areas; and

WHEREAS, in November 2006, area voters approved Metro's Natural Areas Bond Measure, authorizing Metro to issue \$227.4 million for bonds to purchase land in regional target areas; and

WHEREAS, after the Blue Heron Paper mill closed, Metro and its public partners – the City of Oregon City, Clackamas County and the State of Oregon (the “Partners”), came together as the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to secure public access to Willamette Falls; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Partners identified four core values in order to bring the Willamette Falls Legacy Project to life: economic redevelopment, healthy habitat, historic and cultural interpretation and public access to Willamette Falls, a natural wonder in our region; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Falls Legacy LLC purchased the 22-acre former Blue Heron Paper mill property in downtown Oregon City and Portland General Electric (PGE) owns the dam on the site. Falls Legacy LLC granted Metro an easement to construct a riverwalk on the property, and PGE granted Metro an easement option; and

WHEREAS, given the site’s significant historic associations and strong connection to the Willamette River and Willamette Falls, the site has been identified as a “legacy opportunity,” and utilizing bond funds, Metro is playing a lead role in the development of the riverwalk and plans for long term stewardship of natural areas on the site; and

WHEREAS, a technical advisory committee was created, including staff from Metro, Oregon City, Clackamas County and the State of Oregon, which reviews contracts, budgets and project milestones; and

WHEREAS, extensive stakeholder meetings and focus groups included, but are not limited to: neighbors of the site, including residents and business owners in downtown Oregon City, the McLoughlin and Canemah neighborhoods and West Linn; Native American Tribes with ties to the site and to the falls; Falls Legacy LLC; PGE; West Linn Paper Company; user groups advocating for river dependent activities such as fishing, kayaking and pleasure boating; boating companies such as Willamette Jetboat and the Portland Spirit; cultural and heritage organizations and advocates; environmental organizations; federal, state and local agencies and advocacy groups interested in establishing healthy habitats and protecting water quality and river health; business and tourism organizations providing economic development input; and the non-profit friends group for the project, Rediscover the Falls; and

WHEREAS, in order to identify desired and appropriate visitor improvements, Metro and its partners met extensively with the property owner and PGE, conducted widespread public outreach,

including open houses, online surveys, an online community check-in, weekly site tours, presentations and facilitated conversations to local groups and organizations; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Metro developed the Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan, with the oversight, input and review of the Partners, Technical Advisory Committee, project stakeholders, members of the community and Metro Council; and

WHEREAS, the Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan identifies improvements for Metro's easement on the site and future easement on the PGE property, which improvements focus on the Partners' goals and the four core values to protect and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural resources while providing access for visitors to positively experience the natural area; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council's approval of the Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan does not establish final design improvements, is not a final land use decision, and is not binding on local governments, but rather provides recommendations to guide Metro staff and partner jurisdictions as they continue design work; NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Metro Council hereby approves the Willamette Falls Riverwalk Master Plan, attached hereto as Exhibit A.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this 4th day of January 2018.

---

Tom Hughes, Council President

Approved as to Form:

---

Alison R. Kean, Metro Attorney