

# Willamette Falls

**David Frasher**, City Manager, City of Oregon City  
**Martha Bennett**, Chief Operating Officer, Metro



# Willamette Falls: A regional hallmark



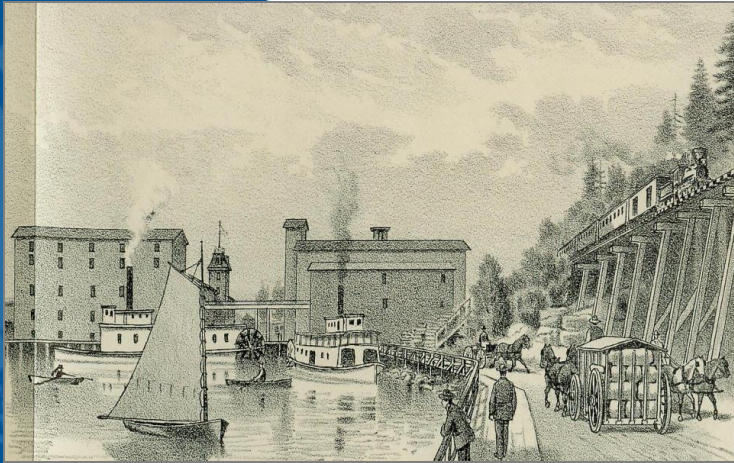
Largest falls by volume in U.S.

2<sup>nd</sup> largest falls by volume in North America

Center of fishing and trade for Native Americans prior to European-American settlement

Power and water supplied by falls spurred industrial growth throughout the 1800s

# Oregon City: Birthplace of industrial history in the west



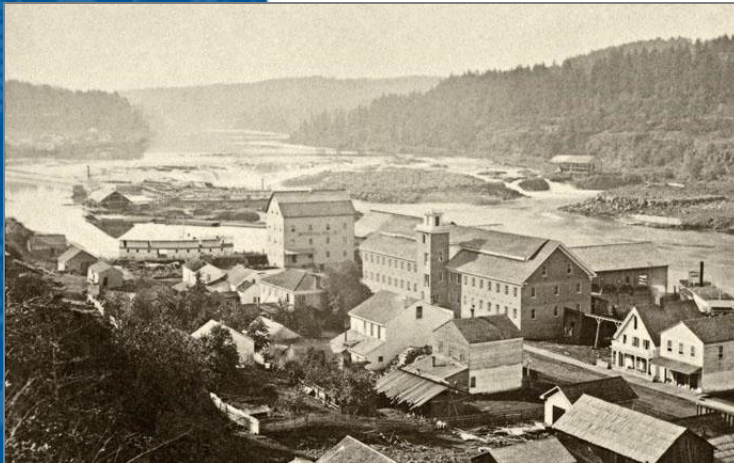
**1829:** Dr. John McLoughlin establishes lumber mill at Willamette Falls

**1844:** 1<sup>st</sup> incorporated city west of the Rockies

**1860s:** Imperial Flour Mills and Oregon City Woolen Mills established

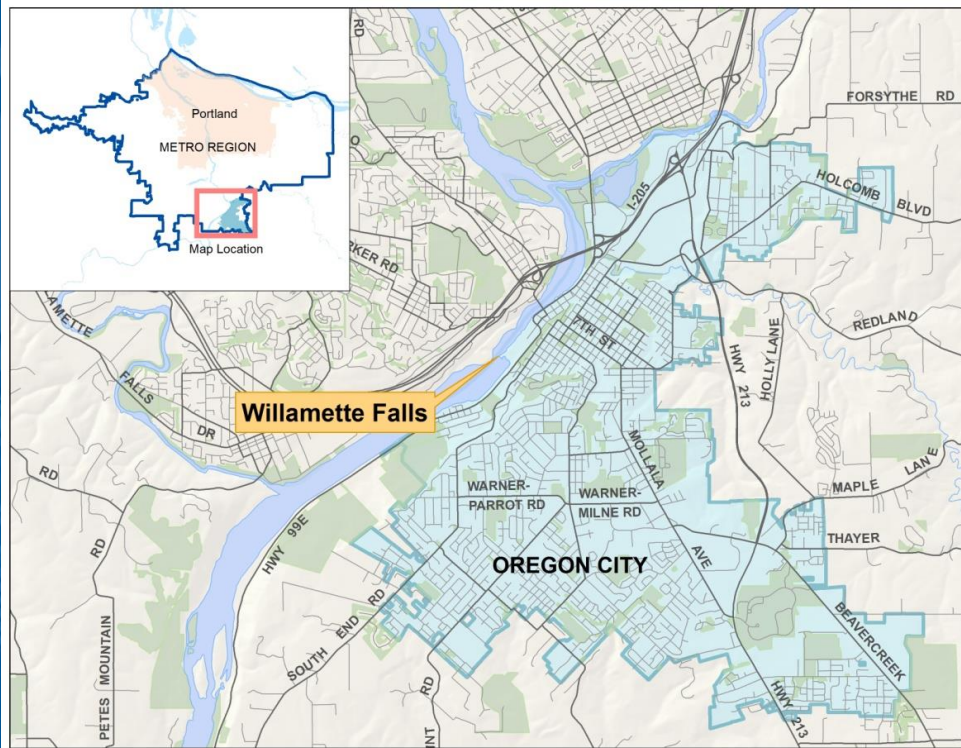
**1866:** First paper mill established

**1870s:** Railroad and locks built; Oregon City's role in western industry solidified





# Opportunity for transformative redevelopment



Strengthen Oregon City's role in the Metro region

Revitalize Oregon City's downtown

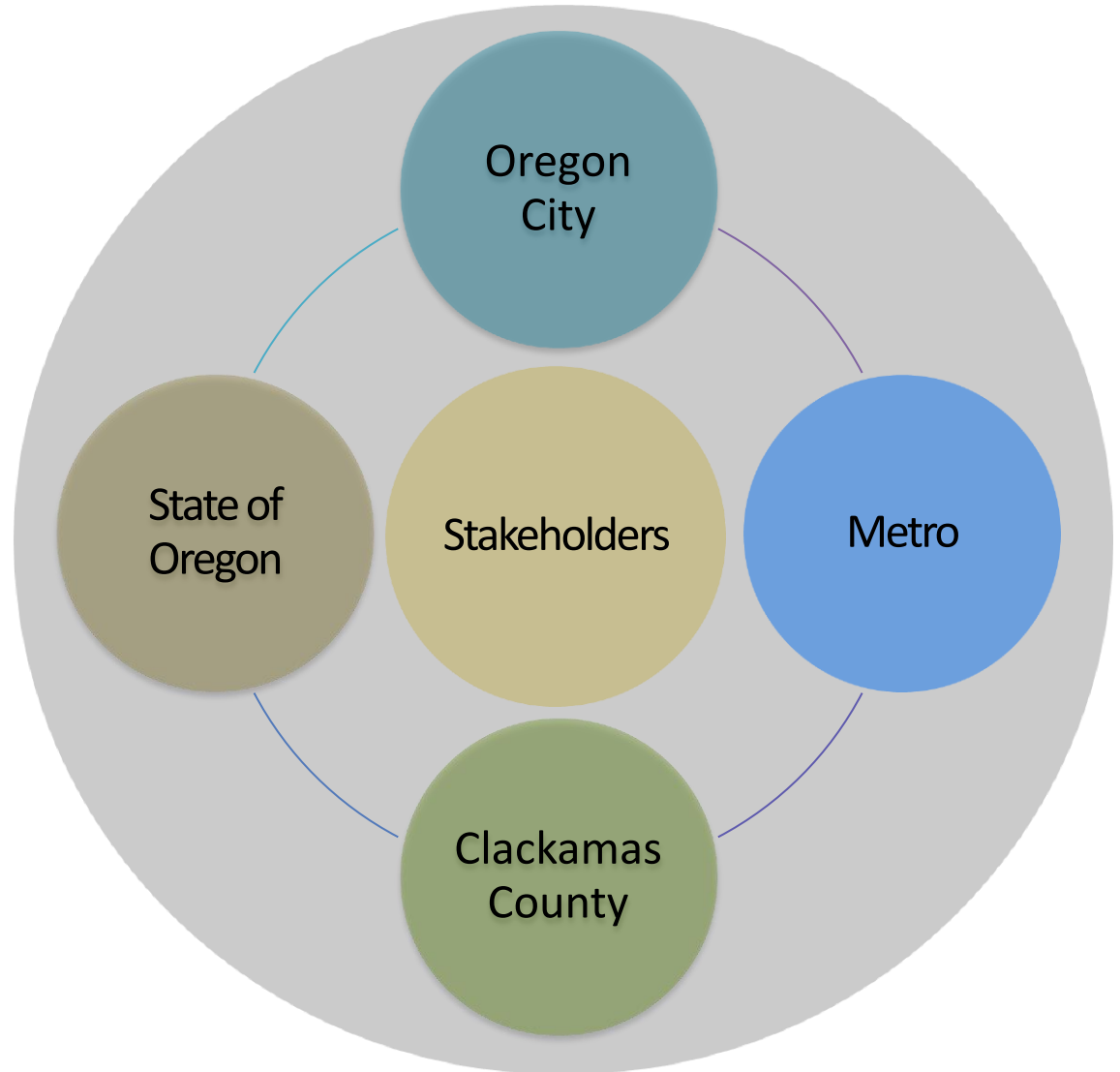
Transform Willamette Falls into a regional destination



# Guided by four values



# Leveraging expertise of a public partnership



# A measured approach

## Due diligence investigations

Quantifying liabilities

## Redevelopment

Realizing opportunities

## Visioning and planning

Building capacity and formulating strategy  
(2013-2014)

**Critical next phase:** Begin demolition and site stabilization. State bond sale of \$5 million would launch this effort.



# Catalytic value

**Increased tourist spending** (based on estimate of 660,000 visitors/year) would create approximately **600 local jobs**

**560 to 1,110 construction jobs**

**550 to 1,090 office and retail jobs**

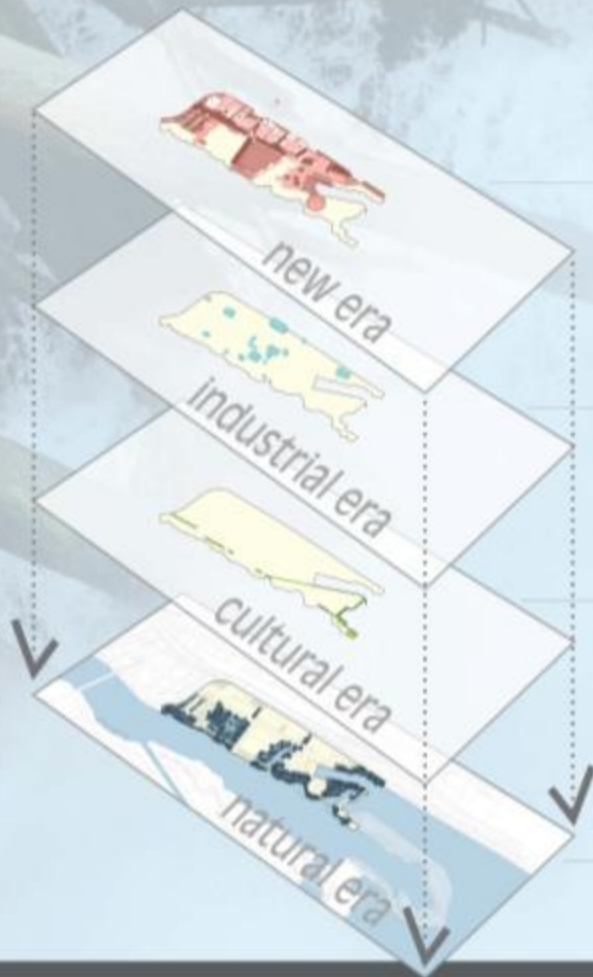
**1,120 to 2,220 indirect and induced jobs** from the multiplier effect of jobs on-site

Redevelopment will **increase property values** in Oregon City, both on-site and by generating at least **\$7.5 million** in off-site property value.

# A New Era Begins...



*The vision is to create an exceptional public experience of Willamette Falls including natural areas and habitat restoration, cultural interpretation and economic redevelopment of the site.*



#### New Era

New economic re-development, in the form of open space and mixed-use buildings along the site's eastern edge, is the culmination of the historical progression. With consideration towards the natural, cultural and industrial (economic) eras coming before, the modern gesture, in the form of architecture and landscape, represents our awareness for the need to balance these three into one sustainable society. Recognizing the importance of interconnectedness, pedestrian links to the surrounding community with bridges and paths are made.

#### Industrial Era

Stepping up above the river to current building level, historical structures of the site's industrial past are preserved and become unique indoor and outdoor spaces, integrated into the new natural and urban fabric, balancing new and old.

#### Cultural Era

The Falls served as one of the main gathering points of Northwest Native American tribes. With fishing platforms overlooking powerful cascades, they depended upon the falls for their sustenance. New boardwalks are elevated along the restored riverbank and take visitors to the Falls overlook which is inspired by these past platforms.

#### Natural Era

With awareness towards the importance of water quality and the benefits of riparian zones, the Natural Era is expressed through a restored riverbank and planted water treatment areas of wetland vegetation and upper riparian forests.

## Conversation with Water



*The energy of The Falls compels visitors along a journey through the site and into a conversation with water. During this journey visitors will discover historical layers of the site have been peeled back to reveal four unique experiences of water. Each with its own conversation; River Restored, Mill Run Reborn, Still Before the Plunge, The Falls; the four experiences complement and contrast each other to reward a vast range of visitors searching for their own unique conversation with water.*

Peeling back the historical layers of the Willamette Falls site reveals a rich strata of eras which tell of impressive geologic and human histories. Before paper was produced here, or settlers ended their journey nearby in Oregon City, or Native Americans fished its waters, the Willamette flowed dramatically over extruded bedrock and past riverine shores as it continues to do today.

Now a new layer is being created, where the discoveries and lessons of past eras are acknowledged and woven into a modern sustainable design. Lessons embedded within this sustainable approach mirror many which guide natural systems as well as our Native American predecessors. This new layer will incorporate environmental, social, and economic components, to realize the comprehensive vision for the site.

The new Willamette Falls site seeks to honor each of these past layers while forming a new one based upon the lessons and discoveries of our own modern history. This stratum reveals itself through the site's proposed spaces, rising from River at the west, to the rocky bluff to the east.



# REDISCOVER WILLAMETTE FALLS

GREENDESIGNS



METRO

# River Restored



East Bank Esplanade, Portland, OR



Allegheny River Waterfront, Pittsburgh, PA



Allegheny River Waterfront, Pittsburgh, PA

# Mill Run Reborn



Headwaters at Tryon Creek, Portland, OR



Tanner Springs Park, Portland, OR



Tanner Springs Park, Portland, OR



Mill Run, 1882 (photo: Wilmer Gardner Collection)

## REDISCOVER WILLAMETTE FALLS



# Still Before the Plunge



Saville Springs Park  
Portland, OR



Waterford Park, Lynn, Florida



Wilmot Park

# The Falls



Celis Falls, Columbia River (photo: CDE)



MFO Park, Zurich, Switzerland



Spokane Falls Riverfront Park, Spokane, WA



Multnomah Falls (photo: Stephanie Harty)

## REDISCOVER WILLAMETTE FALLS

GREENWORKS



METRO





# Thank you.

## **Martha Bennett**

Chief Operating Officer  
Metro

[martha.bennett@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:martha.bennett@oregonmetro.gov)

## **David Frasher**

City Manager  
City of Oregon City  
[dfrasher@orc.gov](mailto:dfrasher@orc.gov)

