The River Plan / North Reach Status Report
June 25, 2009

The River Plan is the first update to the Willamette Greenway Plan in more than twenty years. First crafted in 1979 to serve as Portland’s compliance with Statewide Planning Goal 15 (Willamette River Greenway), the current Willamette Greenway Plan was adopted by the Portland City Council in 1987. The River Plan will replace the 1987 Plan and guide, inspire and facilitate actions along the Willamette River in the future.

The first phase of the River Plan focuses on the North Reach of the River. The North Reach extends roughly from the confluence with the Columbia River to the Broadway and Fremont Bridges. The River Concept, endorsed by City Council in 2006, characterizes the future for the North Reach as follows:

*The North Reach will continue to provide Oregon with access to global markets and support the region’s economy as a West Coast distribution hub and a heavy industrial area. Environmental cleanup, recreational access, and watershed health actions will contribute to the harbor’s long-term vitality.*

River Plan staff engaged property owners, members of interest groups, agency representatives, and the general public in the North Reach planning process for over two years prior to the release of the proposed River Plan / North Reach on October 28, 2008. The proposed draft includes new and revised zoning code regulations, and proposes a suite of new programs and public investments to support objectives in five topic areas:

- Economic Prosperity
- Watershed Health
- Access
- Riverfront Communities
- Working with our Partners
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Planning Commission held several briefings, public hearings and work sessions on the proposed draft:

- August 26, 2008 Briefing
- September 23, 2008 Briefing
- October 28, 2008 Briefing and Document Release
- December 9, 2008 Public Hearing
- January 13, 2009 Public Hearing
- February 24, 2009 Worksession
- March 24, 2009 Worksession
- April 14, 2009 Public Hearing
- May 12, 2009 Worksession
- May 26, 2009 Worksession
- June 23, 2009 Worksession and Final PC Recommendation

The following pages outline some of the key components of the River Plan / North Reach proposal. River Plan staff will brief the Planning Commission on last time regarding the proposal in the Fall of 2009 after which the Planning Commission’s recommended draft will be forwarded to City Council for a public hearing and adoption.

The River Plan / North Reach includes the following key elements:

**Economic Prosperity**

- Protect prime industrial land in the North Reach by prohibiting quasi-judicial Comprehensive Plan Map amendments.
- Retain the i-overlay as a tool to reserve riverfront land for those uses that are river-dependent or river-related.
- Refine the definition of river-related uses to allow more flexibility for industries that switch between primary reliance on river access and rail infrastructure.
- Ensure that riverfront parcels cannot be divided in a way that eliminates the requirement that the use be river-dependent or river-related.
- In the i-overlay, eliminate the greenway setback that currently applies to all development that is not river-dependent or river-related.
- Adopt standards to provide more streamlined permitting for certain industrial activities, including bulkheads, cargo conveyors, rail lines, utility lines and stormwater outfalls.
- Invest in public infrastructure and land development to fuel private reinvestment and create jobs in the working harbor.
- Allow North Reach property owners to conduct off-site mitigation for impacts to natural resources and to pay a fee in-lieu of balanced cut and fill. The mitigation and excavation will occur on one of the River Plan’s restoration/mitigation sites.
- Do not apply river environmental zoning to areas that are ranked low in the Natural Resource Inventory.
Watershed Health

- Adopt an updated Natural Resource Inventory for the North Reach to inform development and restoration activities.
- Adopt a new river environmental overlay zone along the river to strategically protect and conserve natural resources and facilitate certain types of industrial development through standards.
- Develop a restoration program that includes the identification of restoration/mitigation sites that optimizes efforts to improve fish and wildlife habitat in the North Reach.
- Require mitigation for unavoidable impacts to natural resources. If the resources cannot be replaced on site, the applicant can purchase credits from a certified mitigation bank. The mitigation bank will restore resources on one of the River Plan’s restoration/mitigation sites.
- Establish the starting point for the amount of mitigation due as the replacement cost of the affected natural resource. The mitigation cost could then be adjusted up or down depending on the relative resource value, the impact of the project design, the presence or absence of a time lag before the mitigation site has grown to maturity and the uniqueness of the resources on the impact site.
- Require every property in the North Reach to vegetate 15% of their site and provide an incentive to vegetate areas close to the river. If the vegetation cannot be accommodated on the site, a property owner can pay a fee in-lieu and the River Restoration Program will use the funds to restore resources on one of the restoration/mitigation sites.
- Adopt refined conservation and protection overlay zone boundaries to protect and conserve natural resources outside of the river overlay zones.
- Retain the City’s regulatory jurisdiction below ordinary high water and develop a more coordinated process for the federal, state and city review of activities and development in the water.
- Expand City review of dredging proposals to ensure protection of shallow water habitat.

Access

- Adopt a refined regulatory greenway trail alignment along both sides of the Willamette River. The trail will either be an off-street path or along an existing street or railway.
- Include an aspirational trail alignment in the River Plan policy document.
- Develop additional viewpoints that facilitate greater appreciation of the natural landscape and working waterfront in the North Reach.
- Establish an evaluation procedure to ensure that any trail related exaction is roughly proportional to the impacts of the proposed development before the exaction is required.
Riverfront Communities

- Adopt a suite of measures to reduce conflicts between industrial and residential development in the St Johns / Cathedral Park area, including a requirement for additional noise insulation in new residential structures and a recommendation to encourage the establishment of a whistle free zone.
- Improve the vitality of the Linnton neighborhood by rezoning a portion of St. Helens Road from CG to CS to encourage main street reinvestment.
- Work with the Linnton community to identify actions that will revitalize the neighborhood within the context of the August 2006 City Council decision on the Linnton Village Plan.
- Revitalize a long-vacant riverfront parcel adjacent to the University of Portland by rezoning it for university uses.

Working with Our Partners

- Implement process improvements to enhance permit coordination and reduce potential conflicts among City, state and federal agencies in their decision-making.
- Provide clear guidance for contaminated site cleanup and develop materials and strategies to help applicants through the cleanup process.
- Improve communication between the City and our tribal partners.
- Develop programs that ensure continued education and outreach on North Reach issues.
- Establish a mitigation bank certified by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Division of State Lands.
- Submit the River Plan including zoning code, zoning maps, and other relevant regulations and policies to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Environmental Quality to be evaluated as Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate Requirements (ARARs) and To Be Considered (TBC) material for the Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup. This will ensure that the EPA knows and can take into account the City’s River Plan goals during design of the Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup.