

Highway 43/Willamette Falls Drive Visioning Meeting is September 29 at 6:30 p.m. at Rosemont Ridge Middle School

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WEST LINN - Cities change. In the decades to come, West Linn, like other communities in the region, will likely experience increased population growth and traffic congestion, potentially higher fuel costs, economic challenges, and the uncertainties posed by climate change, all of which could affect the livability of the community. One of the City Council's goals for the year is to have the community develop a long-term vision that will encourage desirable change and discourage undesirable change as the area evolves. The Council wants to hear the community's desires and ideas for the future for the Highway 43/Willamette Falls Drive corridor, including the commercial, residential and industrial areas beside these roads, at a workshop on September 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the Rosemont Ridge Middle School Commons.

At the workshop, community members will consider some possibilities for the future of the Highway 43/Willamette Falls Drive corridor, brainstorm other ideas, and identify their preferences. These community preferences will be captured in a concept vision.

There are important choices to make. For example, should the property along the Willamette River between Bolton and Willamette be retained for industrial use or eventually redeveloped as an historic interpretive center with shops, restaurants and a hotel; as a park; or as something else? Should we continue the pattern of strip commercial development along Highway 43; or should we provide for more concentrated development in mixed use centers offering a variety of goods and services? Should we provide for growth in a way that reduces dependence on automobiles?

Over the summer, City staff met with and surveyed residents to identify current problems that they want addressed, the places they want preserved or changed, and what they want to see in the Highway 43/Willamette Falls Drive corridor over the next 20-30 years. Nearly 95% of the survey respondents think the corridor should be improved. The nearly 200 community members involved to date would like:

- Roadways improved to ease traffic congestion;
- Continuous sidewalks or bike paths along Highway 43 and Willamette Falls Drive and safe crosswalks . Eighty eight % of the respondents said that it is important to create safe pedestrian access to commercial areas, schools, and parks;

- An improved streetscape (e.g., landscaping, street lights, benches and trash receptacles) with a consistent theme and gateways to West Linn in Robinwood and near the intersection of Highway 43 and I-205; and
- Frequent transit (78% of survey respondents said that frequent transit should be a component of the vision for the corridor).

There also is interest in building on what we have at commercial centers to create small “villages” with pedestrian plazas, walkable business areas containing restaurants, entertainment, clothing stores, and other businesses meeting community needs, “interesting things worth walking to,” and a variety of housing types that can attract a broad array of residents. Some folks support the idea of providing for higher density housing near shopping areas to help sustain desired businesses.

Several people suggested redeveloping the areas around the I-205 and Highway 43 interchange and the West Linn/Oregon City Arch Bridge. Ideas for the future of these areas include creation of a gateway to West Linn, an historic attraction near the Arch Bridge, more intensive development including, perhaps, a hotel, offices and higher density housing with views of the river, and walkways/bike paths leading to viewpoints of the Willamette Falls. Some people suggested redeveloping the bus garage and recycling center along Willamette Falls Drive to better take advantage of the views.

Numerous people expressed interest in revitalizing the Robinwood Shopping Center. Initial ideas for that area include adding entertainment businesses and neighborhood/pedestrian oriented businesses, perhaps in a mixed use village concept.

People want to protect the historic Willamette area, but some residents are open to the idea of adding a hotel in character with existing commercial development, additional shops and higher density housing within walking distance of the commercial area to help support the desired businesses and provide opportunities to reduce dependence on automobiles.

Based on what they have heard so far, the City identified some possibilities for the future of the corridor to spur people’s brainstorming at the workshop on September 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the Rosemont Ridge Middle School Commons. They urge community members take advantage of this rare opportunity to shape the future of the community and consider these initial concepts, generate other ideas, and identify their preferences for the future of the corridor.

Child care for ages four and up and light refreshments will be provided at the workshop.

For more information, visit <http://westlinnoregon.gov/vision> or contact Sara Javoronok at 503-722-5512, sjavoronok@westlinnoregon.gov or Zach Pelz at 503-723-2542, zpelz@westlinnoregon.gov.

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