

Interviews with Selected Stakeholders

West Linn, Arch Bridge/Bolton Town Center

What We Heard:

Socio-Cultural Aspects

There is considerable awareness and passion for conserving and interpreting the rich local history and not just structures, but events, river, commerce, resources, geology...

A trail along the river is highly desired to link various parts of the community, provide proximity to the water and stunning views, and to interpret history.

There are current organizations prepared to take a role in this.

Local history is a strong basis to build many improvements and investments on, as well as to attract visitors.

West Linn should take advantage of and cooperate with the adaptive re-use of the mill site in Oregon City, a major part of which is access to the Falls.

The traditional commercial and recreational uses of the river have been hampered by the closure of the locks.

The community is very proud of the achievements of its school system, particularly its high school, which still figures prominently in the memories of older residents.

The population is aging but there are few choices in alternative forms of housing if people wish to downside and remain in the community. There is a sense that some retirees leave the area for Arizona and California.

Some community events that occur throughout the year must use the golf club, since that's the only venue that can accommodate larger numbers of people. A meeting venue is needed.

The McLean House, which is a popular location for events, needs more parking.

Economic/Development Aspects

The Mill, which employs around 250 people, is currently providing a solid product in the marketplace – top grade glossy paper, with widespread distribution. However, the operation has become much more operationally efficient and less space-consumptive. The process of receiving materials and sending out finished product is very precise in sequence, however, the location of truck access could change and allow for the current staging access and staging area to be developed for other non-mill uses. (A few trucks would still continue to use that access point, however.) The Mill is examining an alternative access point.

The Bolton shopping center was recently renovated to provide more of a pedestrian environment – although it was controversial when it was proposed.

Other recently efforts by private parties to build on vacant properties or redevelop has been met with stiff resistance by nearby neighbors.

There would very likely be demand for housing overlooking the river, toward Oregon City. Perhaps 4-5 stories of apartments and/or condominiums, with street-level commercial.

More than 40% of businesses in West Linn are home-based and have only one or two employees. It was suggested that this is due to commercial rents in West Linn being high. There might be a demand for executive office space with shared services and amenities.

The old town of Willamette has low vacancies but is still fragile with regard to business activity. Some ground floor spaces are non-retail.

There seems to be a pent-up need for a hotel in West Linn. There is none for visitors.

There are more than 4 dozen restaurants, although some categories (e.g. brewpub) are not present.

There may be demand for lower cost housing in West Linn, especially apartments.

There is relatively little “destination” retail in West Linn; people have to go elsewhere.

Environmental Aspects

The high school has an environmental science program that involves the river and could be expanded to include more dimensions of environmental conservation and awareness.

Local organizations such as Clean Rivers and the Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation are committed to upgrading the health of the river and public access to it.

There is keen interest in interpreting the industrial heritage of West Linn., including seeking a National Heritage Designation, which would make grants available.

Repairing and reopening the locks has been studied, but the project would be very costly.

PGE is active in protecting the natural heritage along the river; they own property along the shoreline, including some land leased to the Mill.