

Governor Tom McCall's Willamette River Greenway Proposal. March 1967.

and

Willamette River Greenway. Prepared for Oregon Department of Transportation by Royston, et al, landscape architects and planners. 1975.

(Reviewed by Susan Mershon)

The first document is a booklet containing Tom McCall's creation of a Willamette River Greenway Committee and Task Force. He calls for creating a recreational and scenic corridor along the river. He says this plan isn't intended to infringe on existing land uses along the river such as farming. Also, it is not to be a massive state program, but a state assistance program coordinated with local governments.

The second document is the fruit of that proposal, the plan "to conserve the Willamette River as a scenic, scientific, historic, recreational, economic, and transportation resource." The planners advocate wise use of river lands, giving priority to river-oriented activities and "assumes that those activities which are not oriented to the River can be as effective when located elsewhere."

The river environment contains adjacent lands, which are important to the plan. There are four land categories: river, urban, farm, and non-farm (everything else).

The book contains two sets of maps of the river, one showing existing conditions and one showing the greenway plan. The greenway is a corridor with boundaries, as shown on the map. A little larger is a "river influence zone." Certain features are described: proposed auto or bicycle routes, trail, "areas of critical concern," public ownership, and open areas. The planners organize river uses into categories, and call them out on the map: preservation, conservation, agricultural land, and recreation. Access to the river is very important for public use.

The planners make it clear that the rural, agricultural character of the river should be maintained. "It is possible that an urban corridor along both sides of the Willamette River from Eugene to the Columbia River could develop. Such an urban corridor would be highly undesirable, and is not compatible with the Greenway concept." The planners suggest "highly restrictive zoning" along the river to ensure that such sprawl doesn't occur. Moreover, cities along the river should present a good face to the river and not their ugly backsides.

Statewide agencies are to work with local agencies to implement and manage the Greenway plan.

Critique

The first source, Tom McCall's proposal, is interesting only historically. The second source, the plan,

has specific actions and sites and is more informational. The map sets are nice.

The greenway plan is implemented locally; only the zoning guidelines for the river are shown instead of specific site plans. It would be good to see later information showing implementation of the sites and data on how the public has used them.

The greenway plan creates an infrastructure for enjoyment of the river. It doesn't address other issues like pollution. Tom McCall must have believed that the river will become a jewel if we treat it like one. If people are encouraged to use the river, they will protect it. The greenway plan is just one part of a larger policy.

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