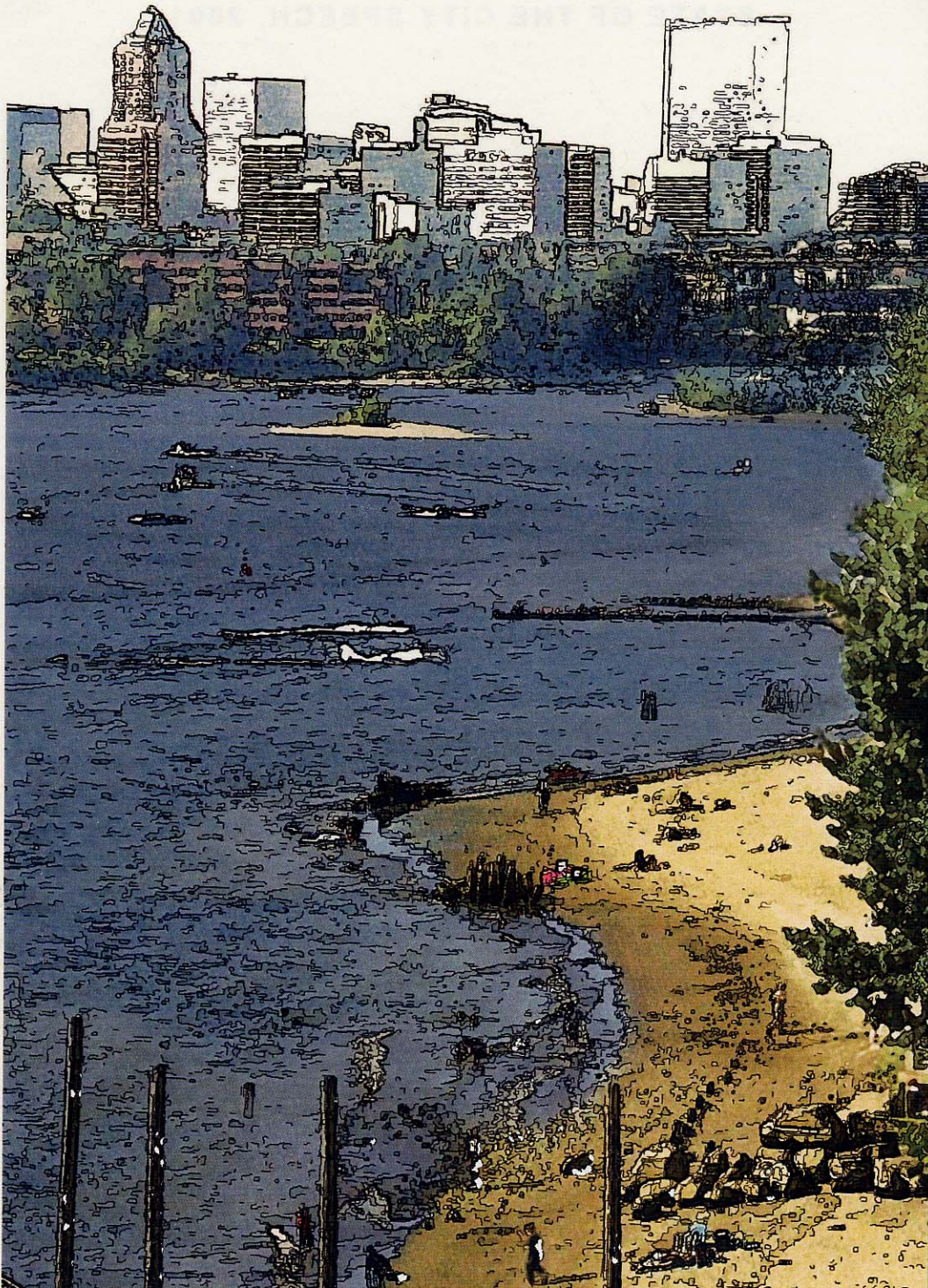


PROPOSED

River Renaissance Strategy

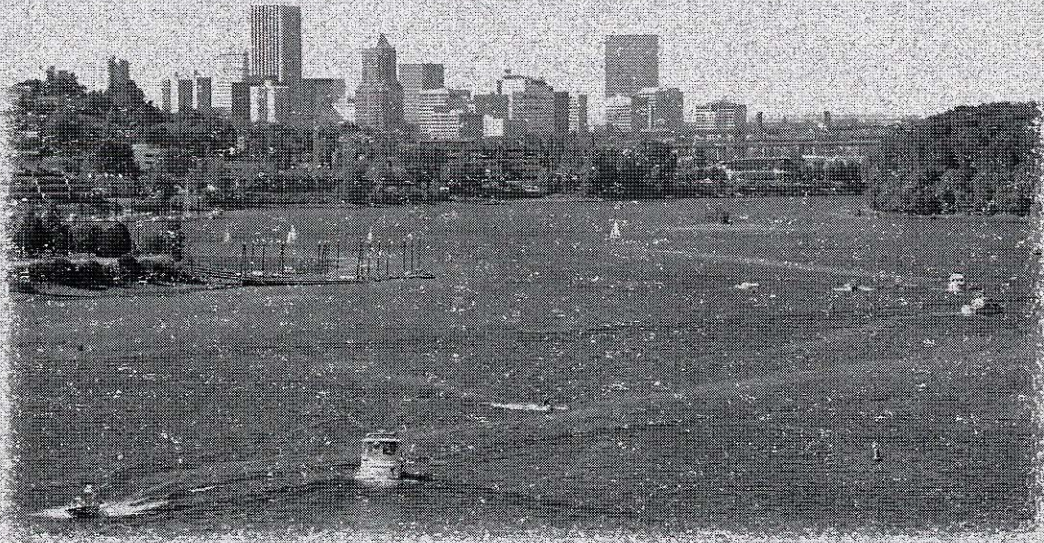
OCTOBER 2004



strategy
guidance
progress
leadership
funding
action



Preface



The waters of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers lap at the edge of our lives and livelihoods. They course amid skyscrapers and parks, docks, port terminals, warehouses and neighborhoods. Linking east and west, the Willamette is Portland's true city center and the Columbia our gateway to the Pacific, and beyond.

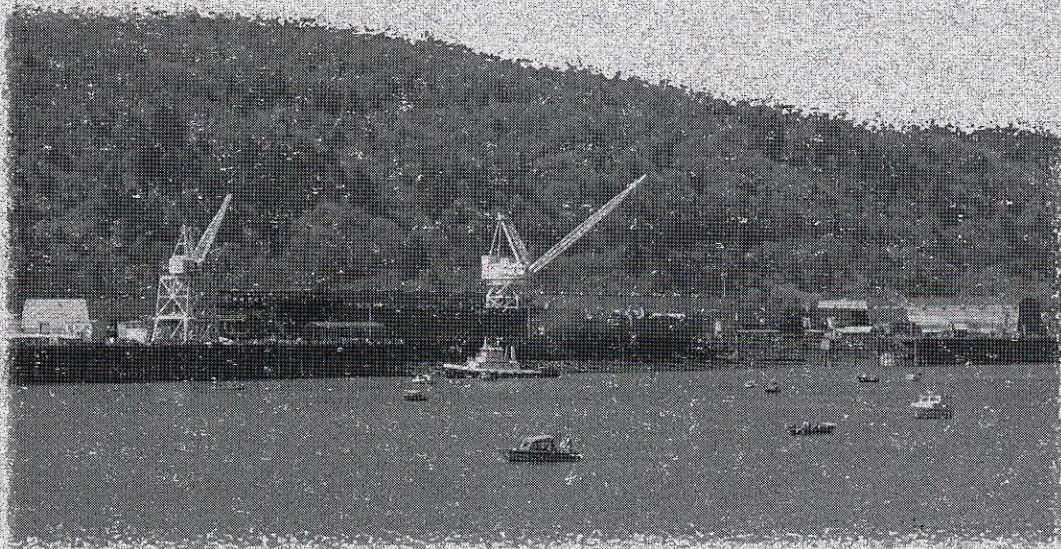
These mighty rivers and their tributary streams flow from the Cascades, the Coast Range and Portland's west hills. They meander through the Willamette Valley and trickle through residential and industrial neighborhoods.

Many of the world's great cities are built around rivers. But thriving economies and healthy river systems do not usually exist simultaneously. In Portland we intend to create a harmony between city and nature unmatched anywhere in the world.

Our resources are rich, our ideas bold, our investments thus far admirable. And it shows. There are few cities where office workers can peer out 20th story windows and spot a bald eagle soaring past, or fish for salmon during the lunch hour under the shadow of construction cranes, or where joggers can sprint through a lush, 5,000-acre forest where black bear and elk live, just minutes from museums and theaters.

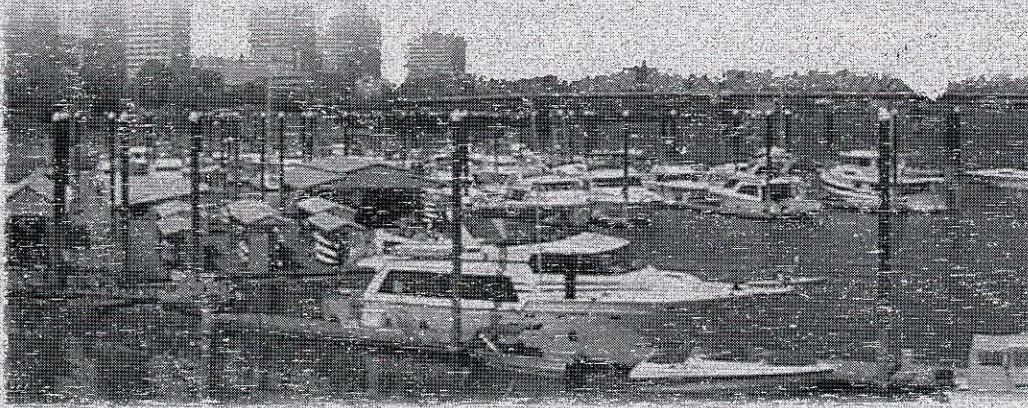
Yet, there's no denying that our rivers and streams are polluted, that many species of native fish, plants and wildlife are on the decline, and that invasive species are a significant challenge. We aim to improve our natural systems—while helping the city flourish.

Portland is an extraordinary place where business and nature can and do co-exist.



Riverfront land is a finite, valuable asset. Economic health is necessary to retain jobs for longshoremen, river pilots, metal workers, manufacturers and many others who depend on the working harbor. Environmental health is essential for people and for the survival of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians that rely on riparian habitats. We can and must be responsible to the health of all of these.

It will be a challenge. One in eight jobs in the city depends on the working harbor, but industry is rife with uncertainty: Superfund sites, channel depth, environmental regulations and competition—globally and close to home. And, riverside property is in high demand for competing residential, commercial and recreational uses.



We must revitalize our neighborhoods for living and doing business, keep our harbor prosperous, and improve our natural environment. Development and redevelopment can serve as powerful economic engines to restore and sustain an ecologically thriving river system.

Shorelines are among Portland's most fascinating places. At the Port's Terminal 6 on the Columbia River, cottonwood trees leaf out above a dock where linemen grab ropes to tie up an immense cargo ship from Japan. Neighbors walking the Springwater Trail along Johnson Creek at dusk stop to watch a beaver scampering onto a log. A warehouse worker, relaxing on a bench at lunch, is entertained by a heron fishing for a meal on the Willamette.

Portland is already renowned as a well-planned city. Now we aim beyond—to integrate development and the natural environment as harmoniously as possible.

A few years ago, a thousand Portlanders spoke of their dreams and demands for the Willamette. We want to touch the river, they said. We want access, to get close enough to the river to get the feel of it.

More access won't be easy. Of more than thirty miles of Willamette riverfront in Portland, there are a mere dozen public parks, half that many motorized boat launch sites and only three of those are public. Boulders, rip-rap, stone walls, brambles and steep slopes today line the shores but that's no deterrent to dreams of better access. People would like to connect to the Willamette through waterside parks, trails, viewpoints, bikeways, river taxis, ferries, docks and marinas.

They appreciate that the river can provide richly textured experiences. Festivals. Parks. Habitat. Playgrounds. Shipyards. Restaurants. Art centers. Urban promenades. And even a wish for "a large, visible artwork to really define the waterfront, like the Statue of Liberty does for New York and the Opera House for Sydney."

Welcome to your river, Portland's Front Yard.



The Renaissance

An unlikely spot, it would seem, for an eagle to build a nest, next to a gravel quarry near downtown. Or that a peregrine falcon would opt for an aerie on the Interstate 405 bridge. We, too, need to think differently.



During the past century, the health of our rivers has been severely compromised. At the same time, significant progress has been made in ending some of the most destructive practices. To continue restoring our rivers, streams and their watersheds, what's needed is continued commitment, an enthusiasm for innovation, an openness to partnerships, an unprecedented level of public education, participation and bridges that forge connections across boundaries.

We have a history that proves we're up to the task. In 1974, Portland closed the Harbor Drive Freeway on the river's west bank. Now, Tom McCall Waterfront Park is a place for concerts, festivals, dog-walking, roller-blading, sweetheart strolling, picnics, poems in stone, maritime history, and is one of the most popular places in town.

In 2003, the Port of Portland and Toyota worked together to integrate fish and wildlife habitat into a state-of-the-art automobile terminal. And at South Waterfront a new neighborhood and employment center with towering views of Ross Island is emerging from the brownfields of yesteryear. Together, we will find new ways to protect, improve and celebrate the river.

The Willamette and Columbia Rivers are the central reason Portland exists. These rivers have shaped us as a place, and as a people. Now it's time for a renaissance, to reclaim the rivers as our centerpiece and gateway to the Pacific, and our streams as neighborhood treasures. That this is even possible is part of what's unique and beautiful about the inspiring city that Portland has become.

Let's roll up our sleeves—together.

