

THE SOUL OF THE FIRST CITY

Where Creativity Meets the Current

By Rebecca Sira, Multidisciplinary Artist, Oregon City Arts Commission Vice Chair

Oregon City isn't just a stop on the map; it's an experience shaped by the rugged power of the Willamette Falls and a sophisticated hum of makers, doers, and entrepreneurs. Our creative scene is built on layers of history from the deep ancestral roots of The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to our status as the Oregon Territory's "First City." Today, that heritage fuels a modern creative economy where art is a key driver of our local identity and economic vitality.

The Landscape of Public Art

In Oregon City, art is integrated into our civic fabric, enhancing the aesthetic value of our business districts. Under the guidance of the Oregon City Arts Commission (OCAC), our streets serve as a gallery. Whether it's a vibrant mural honoring the heritage of the land's indigenous peoples or a basalt sculpture evoking the return of the river's salmon, our public art collection acts as a visual bridge between our industrial roots and our modern creative future. Visitors and residents alike can explore this ecosystem through the Oregon City Art Tour, a self-guided journey that connects our public installations with our bustling river corridors.

A Hub for Makers and Small Business

From tactile craftsmanship to technical innovation, Oregon City supports a diverse creative workforce. Organizations like the Clackamas County Arts Alliance and the Three Rivers Artist Guild (TRAG) provide the framework for local creators from traditional painters to digital artists to turn inspiration into sustainable careers.

This spirit of "social creativity" is anchored by local businesses and community hubs:

- **DIY Craft Spaces & Art Lounges:** From the unique creative energy and classes at Soufflags, to SaberForge, where you can assemble your own custom light saber. The community also welcomes Māk, a brand new art cafe where you can order your crafty kits from a menu of options.
- **Public Engagement:** Willamette Falls Studios is the community's public broadcasting and media center for digital innovations for podcasters, producers, and more. The Oregon City Public Library (with its creative kits and "art gym" events) prove that in Oregon City, the barrier between artist and observer is thin.

Map: Rebecca Sira



The Soundtrack of the City

The Willamette Falls, the second largest waterfall by volume in the continental US, provide a natural rhythm for a music scene that creates significant foot traffic for our local economy.

● **Summer Vibrancy:** Live Music on the Water with eNRG Kayaking and the Concerts in the Park series at Abernethy Green turn our scenic landscapes into major music halls.

● **Year-Round Culture:** The Willamette Falls Symphony brings classical mastery to the stage, while Willamette Falls Studios hosts 1st Thursday at the Studios and Villa Catalana hosts Concerts in the Conservatory for more intimate indoor sessions, providing a cultural anchor during the cooler months.

Signature Events and Economic Impact

Our cultural calendar serves as a powerful magnet for regional tourism. The second weekend of August sees a city-wide transformation:

● **Regional Draws:** The Oregon City Festival of the Arts and the Oregon City Outdoor Antique Fair attract collectors and enthusiasts from across the Northwest.

● **Neighborhood Vitality:** PorchFest and the McLoughlin Neighborhood Yard Sale turn the historic McLoughlin Neighborhood into a sensory journey, showcasing our 19th-century architecture and community spirit.

● **Seasonal Transitions:** The Willamette Falls Music Festival in September bridges the seasons, maintaining the city's momentum as the rhythm shifts toward the hearth.

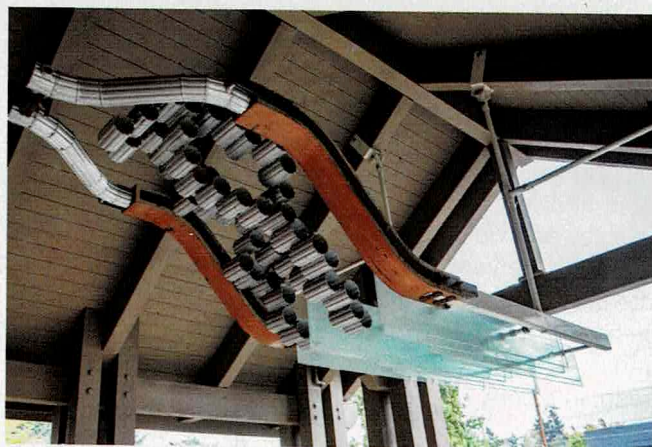
A Stage for Storytelling and Growth

Performing arts in Oregon City reflect a commitment to professional excellence and future talent. The Clackamas Repertory Theatre brings high-caliber productions to the college campus, while the Oregon City Children's Theater nurtures the next generation of dreamers and doers. Even our history is an immersive asset; during the Mountain View Cemetery Tours in October, the stories of those who came before us are brought to life through living history portrayals.

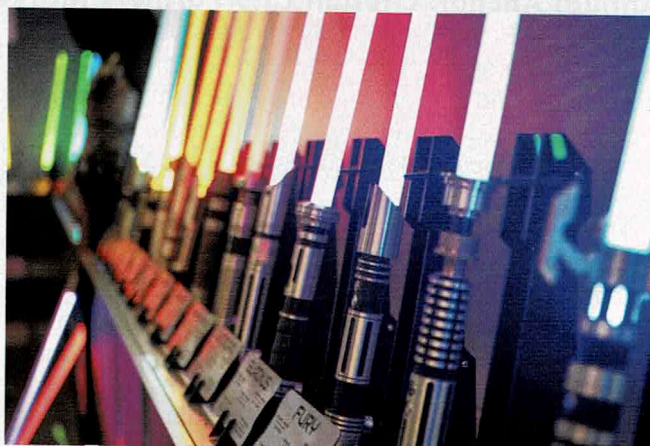
As the year winds down, Heritage Holidays celebrate our history through storytelling and craft, while the Willamette Falls Makers Market provides a vital platform for local artisans during the gift-giving season. In Oregon City, the arts reflect a deep sense of collaboration between our citizens, local businesses, and civic leaders. Whether you are here for the mist of the falls or the music on a neighbor's porch, you are witnessing a community where the current of creativity drives our future.



Concerts in the Park stage and audience
Photo: City of Oregon City



Future Flow by artist Nick Thomas
Photo: City of Oregon City



SaberForge showroom display
Photo: Travel Oregon City



Elemental Love by artist Jenny Ellsworth
Photo: City of Oregon City

VISIT

Oregon City

2026



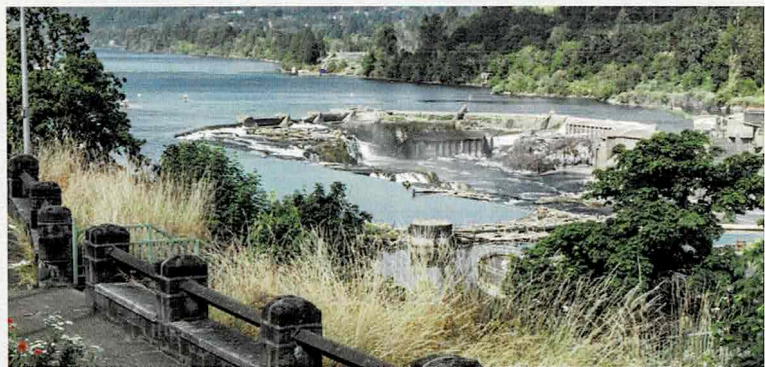
ACTIVITIES | HISTORY | EVENTS
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Welcome Home

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