****

**REQUEST FOR GOVERNOR’S DESIGNATION**

Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative Assessment Summary

Request for Designation:

State Representative Jeff Reardon and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales have requested that Governor Brown designate the Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative as an Oregon Solutions project. Based on the Oregon Solutions assessment, Oregon Solutions recommends to Governor Brown that she designate this project an Oregon Solutions project.

Background:

Lents and Powellhurst-Gilbert are diverse, low-income neighborhoods, with more children and single parents than other areas of Portland. In the Powellhurst-Gilbert area alone, the number of residents living in the area who self-identify as Black or African American and Native Hawaiian have increased more than 244% in the last ten years. Additionally, those residents who self-identified Hispanic or Latino residents have increased 136% and Asian residents have increased more than 100 percent[[1]](#endnote-1).

Residents are disproportionally under-served and face historical inequities measured in community investment. There is a historical pattern of employment and residential development allowed to occur within the Johnson Creek 100-year floodplain as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Within these two neighborhoods, about 330 acres are designated by FEMA as flood hazard areas. The impacts from this flood hazard designation undermine new development and job creation, creating a financial hardship for hundreds of residents as a result of rising insurance costs. The periodic flooding of Foster Road and adjacent industrial land impacts the environmental health of Johnson Creek.

Project Goals and Benefit to the State:

The Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative is designed to enhance equity through community investment; and, to serve as model for improving community conditions in ways that can be replicated in other parts of the state. Few places offer the same potential to leverage actions toward the triple bottom line of sustainability – addressing economy, equity and environment – in one location. The project would build a foundation for improving community stability, equity, natural resource restoration and economic growth in flood-prone areas of the Lents and Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhoods. Key goals:

* 400 single-family properties no longer in the floodplain (71 acres)
* 60+ acres of industrial land no longer in the floodplain
* $105 million increase in employment property value
* 30 acres of additional natural areas for restoration

Assessment Indicates Oregon Solutions will Add Important Value:

State Representative Jeff Reardon initiated the Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative in cooperation with Lents area community representatives, state agency representatives, and City of Portland agencies. Oregon Solutions committed extended staff time to manage a number of assessment meetings with key stakeholders over the past 16 months. With outstanding efforts by the City Bureau of Environmental Services, we were able to distill the complex array of issues into a viable plan for approaching this project. Oregon Solutions believed that the project objectives, with benefits to the economy, equity and the environment, made this a high value project to pursue.

The project would be a multi-year effort to build a foundation for improving community stability, equity, natural resource restoration and economic growth in flood-prone areas of the Lents and Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhoods. With the support of city agencies, the City of Portland has approved a comprehensive funding package in their just approved FY 2016-2017 budget. Funding includes matching funds for Oregon Solutions project management as well as funding for technical assistance and in-kind city agency participation.

Designation of the project by the Governor as an Oregon Solutions project will bring a comprehensive level of support for the stakeholder involvement needed to initiate this multi-faceted project. No single local, state or federal entity is responsible for addressing all of the risks and challenges of living or doing business in a floodplain. This work requires a neutral forum and a collaborative approach from the public, private and community sectors, and a project management structure to support the work over the long term. Oregon Solutions is uniquely positioned to engage state agencies in determining how to permit and manage a local flood mitigation strategy in a way that stabilizes the residential community and catalyzes job creation. In recognition of equity among this under-served community, we will have to implement measures to minimize gentrification.

Oregon Solutions will, in consultation with state and federal partners, identify stakeholders to participate in the process and to contribute to the success of the project. Stakeholders will include those representing under-served residents within the area, owners of under-utilized industrial land, and owners of businesses impacted by the flood hazard designation as well as the actual flooding that is disruptive to their commerce. Oregon Solutions will facilitate and manage the process with a leadership team. We will conclude with a Declaration of Cooperation memorializing commitments made by participants and identifying how to align resources in order to succeed.

State Agency Involvement:

The Portland Metro Regional Solutions Team (RST) has engaged in the planning discussions over the past year and supports Governor Brown’s designation of the project as an Oregon Solutions project. If designated, RST is committed to being part of the Oregon Solutions process. Once the process is completed, and implementation strategy and priorities agreed upon by the participants, the project will be proposed to the Regional Solutions Advisory Committee and the full RST for their concurrence. Once approved, RST will coordinate the State’s investments and technical assistance to advance the project especially around industrial/employment lands readiness, natural resource restoration, flood mitigation and brownfield cleanup.

State agencies anticipated to be involved are: Housing and Community Service, Environmental Quality, State Lands, Business Oregon/IFA, Fish and Wildlife, Emergency Management, Land Conservation and Development.

Convener Recommendations:

Oregon Solutions recommends two co-conveners for the Governors consideration. The first recommended convener is State Representative Jeff Reardon. Rep. Reardon serves this area in the State House of Representatives and has been a devoted supporter of the project and an advocate for equity among his under-served constituents. Oregon Solutions also recommends the Governor appoint Michelle Rudd as the other co-convener. Ms. Rudd is a Land Use Attorney, Partner at Stoel Rives; and, a Portland Planning and Sustainability Commissioner. Previously, she worked as a civil engineer and obtained a Master's degree in City and Regional Planning. Savoy Magazine named her to their “Most Influential Black Lawyers” list. She brings technical expertise of the highest level to this project.

Summary Recommendation to Governor Brown:

Oregon Solutions recommends to Governor Brown that she designate the Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative an Oregon Solutions project. Oregon Solutions will add critical value in facilitating the multi-agency and stakeholder interests in developing strategies and projects to preserve existing housing, enhance industrial lands for job growth; and, mitigate and enhance floodplains along Johnson Creek.

1. <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/375977>

   More detailed information can be found in the accompanying, “Lents Stabilization and Job Creation Collaborative – Project Details”. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)