

SW Corridor Equity and Housing Advisory Group Members,

We appreciate the work being done to plan more holistically for this once-in-a-lifetime investment in transit and housing in the SW Corridor. All areas of our region deserve opportunities to create healthier, better connected, and economically vibrant communities, and transportation infrastructure which supports access to opportunity. An investment as significant as a new light rail line connecting to downtown Portland certainly deserves careful planning and consideration. Our community-based organizations are working actively in the area to educate and meaningfully engage current residents in the planning process. Underscoring all our conversations is the very real need for a robust set of policies which offer housing security for renters, who lack stability and predictability in an environment which allows for no cause evictions, landlord retaliation, discriminatory screening processes and unfettered rent increases. These same households are most dependent on transportation options which offer affordable access to living wage employment, educational opportunities and connections to our region's natural amenities.

It is with this grounded understanding of the impact of a high-capacity transit project that we urge the cities of Portland and Tigard to adopt an equitable housing strategy. We hope to support a comprehensive and well capitalized strategy that centers the impacts this project will have on the most housing insecure in our community. Please account for the following considerations as you draft the strategy:

- **Anti-displacement Services.** We know equitable outcomes will only be achieved if we prioritize meeting the near term needs of those most impacted by the current housing crisis. Low-income residents and people of color are most acutely and disproportionately experiencing unsustainable increases in housing costs and renters are being evicted without just cause. The housing strategy should include a suite of anti-displacement services such as providing emergency rental assistance, legal aid, and education and outreach.
- **New funding available early.** Past investments and current dedicated resources are insufficient to meet the current and future demand for quality, safe, affordable housing in the corridor. Though some limited existing funding like Tigard's URA and Portland's housing bond will certainly be utilized to fill some of this need, new sources of funding must be identified, and the political will built to support them. We are not calling for other equity and anti-displacement agendas in other parts of the region like North and Northeast Portland and East Portland to be diverted to SW Corridor; rather, we are calling for the cities and regional partners to take action to create new sources of funding like a regional housing bond with a transit orientation, a new URA in SW Portland, and seeding a land/property acquisition fund like NOAH's acquisition fund. Without this kind of early investment, we may limit and/or lose the opportunity to make a real impact in the supply of affordable housing. While new housing should complement the transit investment, tenants currently living in naturally occurring affordable housing are very much at risk for these buildings to be sold and for a change in ownership to result in higher rents, displacing residents. Housing preservation strategies are just as critical as new construction.

- **Publicly controlled land.** One critical lesson learned from past light rail expansion projects is we must get ahead of market speculation and secure sites for equitable TOD. Public organizations can and should buy land early in a process that is based on effective and transparent coordinating partnership between these agencies. Sites need to be secured at each station area with clear affordability goals set for each.
- **Enacting new and strengthening existing land use tools.** While much emphasis has been placed on securing new funding for affordable housing, less attention has been paid to the regulatory tools that can achieve equitable outcomes. We hope to see a housing strategy that builds on the good planning and tools currently in place by enacting new tools like TOD overlays and development agreements that allow developers to provide affordable housing integrated in market rate developments.
- **Support of ongoing engagement and long-term accountability.** A strength of this planning process has been the funding commitment to CBOs to engage low-income residents and communities of color. We hope this commitment will continue and organizations will be supported to have a lasting presence in the corridor throughout the implementation of the strategy.
- **Formation of a Community Preservation workgroup.** Regular updates from the planning team and project leads about how equity goals are being met will ensure CBOs have up to date and relevant information to share with the community during regular engagement and will help build trust, accountability and a shared interest in the success of the project.

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