

PORTLAND COMMISSION ON DISABILITY



January 16, 2018

Dear Commissioners and Directors,

We, the Portland Commission on Disability, write to share support and provide guidance to the City Council and Bureau Directors as you develop and adopt an Equitable Housing Strategy for the SW Corridor. We are committed to ensuring that our city is universally accessible and promotes equity for all. The potential multi-billion dollar public investment in light rail in the SW Corridor is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform our equity and accessibility policies into action that meets the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

We want to thank the staff from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Portland Housing Bureau for meeting with our Accessibility Sub-Committee. We enjoyed a lengthy discussion of the broad goals to increase new housing choices and mitigate displacement of existing vulnerable households along the corridor. Upon reflection we see four areas of opportunity to further the PCOD's mission:

1. **Expand the Definition of Vulnerable Populations.** The equitable housing strategy has a strong focus on vulnerable populations; low-income households and communities of color. We operate with an intersectional lens so fully understand the multiplying challenges of people with disabilities who are also low-income and/or identify as a person of color. Classism and racism are especially destructive forces when combined with ableism. Given this intersection and the housing strategies' emphasis on location efficiency and transit accessibility we ask that the City also include people with disabilities in their definition of vulnerable populations.
2. **Create New Affordable Housing Resources and Focus Them on the Most Vulnerable People** Increasing housing costs and involuntary displacement are a significant issue for low-income people with disabilities. More affordable housing funding is needed. The Portland Housing Bond is a great new resource but much more is needed. We ask that the City Council adopt a housing strategy that is meaningfully capitalized with new sources of identified funding.

People who receive disability payments and/or other forms of fixed incomes have extremely low-incomes. People with disabilities are disproportionately represented amongst households with 0-30% of the Median Family Income. An emphasis should be made to produce and preserve more affordable units that serve households making 0-30% MFI.

3. **Design Affordable Housing Buildings for Greater Accessibility.** We ask that City-funded multi-family affordable housing buildings go above the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. For example, a greater percentage of units being ADA accessible. In addition,

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we ask that units be designed to be age friendly using principles of universal design. For example including showers not tubs and having less walls and doors to create open rooms.

4. Locate and Develop Light Rail Stations That Are Accessible. New stations in the corridor should be located near the existing communities on and just west of Barbur Boulevard to increase the likelihood the station areas will develop in a more accessible way. Station locations along Interstate 5 will create more challenges for some people with disabilities due to the obstacles to accessibility created by I-5 and Barbur themselves.

To ensure greater accessibility we recommend that pedestrian infrastructure be built concurrently with the stations and the housing so the two are connected. A wise investment strategy will seek to provide affordable housing in close proximity to the stations and also accessibility for them to get safely to the new transit service.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide guidance on the SW Corridor Equitable Housing Strategy in these early stages. We hope to see our recommendations incorporated into the final draft strategy and look forward to providing further comments as the Council is considering approving plans for the light rail project and housing strategy

Regards,

The Accessibility & The Built Environment Sub-Committee