



Black community focus groups

Lloyd to Woodlawn Neighborhood Greenway

For the last year, PBOT has been exploring design options for a new Neighborhood Greenway in Northeast Portland between the Lloyd and Woodlawn neighborhoods. To create a safer place for people to walk, bike, and drive, PBOT held and participated in many public events and community conversations to develop concepts for a Neighborhood Greenway on NE 7th or NE 9th Avenue.

Elevating Black voices

In August, PBOT held an open house to share initial design concepts for a Neighborhood Greenway. At this event, we heard new and broadly shared concerns about the project from Black community members and community organizations in attendance.

PBOT is committed to increasing diversity, advancing equity and fostering inclusion in everything that we do. In response to these concerns, we spent this winter working with Black community groups Self Enhancement, Inc., Portland Community Reinvestment Initiative Inc., and in consultation with Albina Head Start and the Soul District Business Association to understand how the Lloyd to Woodlawn Neighborhood Greenway Project could impact the lives of Black community members with ties to North and Northeast Portland.

“We know change will happen; that’s life. But the change has to be tailored to the community, not just an individual group without regard for others.”

-FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT



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Focus group takeaways

During two focus group sessions, Black Portlanders shared many concerns about how the NE 7th proposal could hurt the Black community left in North and Northeast Portland, impacting their travel patterns without expanding their viable travel options; there was also concern the project could frustrate efforts for displaced community members to maintain ties with and return to that part of Portland. Additional feedback fell into four broad categories:

A lack of faith in the citywide plans + policies that guide our work

Community members felt that they weren't invited to participate when plans were set in motion years ago and have little control over them now. Among some, the community's loss of control over its future has created despondency and a lack of trust and willingness to engage with the City and City initiatives.

Strong opposition to traffic pattern changes on 7th

This was primarily related to very practical traffic flow concerns, but also symbolic concerns about who the proposal is designed to serve. The proposed physical barriers are seen as literally excluding community groups from easy access to homes and destinations.

Opposition to transformative changes on 7th

Transformative change often comes with unintended consequences. Participants highlighted that theirs was a community that time and again has been asked to weather the impacts of change for the 'Greater Good' and that the 'Greater Good' never seems to include the Black community.

Recognition that NE 7th can and should be made safer

Focus group participants consistently mentioned King Elementary School as a location that could use safety improvements, as well as other locations along the corridor where pedestrians cross and congregate.

“As soon as an idea comes up for any kind of project or changes, Black folks need to be at the table. Sometimes, we don't even know there's a table to be at!”

“I think putting some flashing lights at crossings would be a good idea. Those signs that show your speed would be good. That slows me right down.”

“Kids aren't always paying attention and its up to us to get them to school safely.”

