

*Vancouver*

July 17, 1953

Colonel Oren C. Price  
Chief, Real Estate Division  
Department of the Air Force  
Headquarters United States Air Force  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Colonel Price:

This communication concerns the approximately 640-acre tract of land situated in Oregon between the City of Portland and the City of Vancouver, Washington, which formerly was the site of the City of Vanport, Oregon.

This tract of land, formerly used by the Federal Public Housing Authority for emergency war housing, was declared surplus, and it is our understanding that the United States Air Force is the only governmental agency which has not released its rights of purchase. We in Portland are very much interested in economy and, therefore, readily understand that your interest in this property, now in governmental ownership, is sound from the standpoint of your budget. We also recognize that the economy of the nation is dependent upon the economy of all areas both residential and industrial within the nation. It is on this basis that I am making the request for and in behalf of the City of Portland that the City of Portland be allowed to purchase this property at the figure which it would be made available to a municipality if it were not used by a federal agency, namely, \$100,000.

We are a rapidly expanding area both from a census and industrial basis, and we are second only to the Port of Los Angeles in Pacific Coast shipping. Our charter allows us to make available properties for industrial purposes, and we are sorely in need of additional industrial sites. We also are sadly lacking in an area which could be developed as a convention and recreation center and our economy is being penalized because we have inadequate facilities for industrial expositions and convention headquarters. We are the most concentrated area in the State of Oregon from the standpoint of census, as well as industry, having more than one-third the assessed valuation of the state within our approximately 70 square miles, as compared to the state's over-all area of more than 96,000 square miles, and having approximately one-third of the population of the entire State of Oregon. In addition to this,



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this Vanport site is adjacent to Highway 99 and the bridge that connects Portland and the City of Vancouver, Washington.

The above conditions cause us great concern because of the plans of the Air Force to store rockets, and even though we have been assured that the effect of an explosion of a rocket igloo would not be damaging further than one mile distant, we know that a storage dump of this kind would be a prime target and a near miss would be disastrous to Vancouver, Washington, on the one side, the only connecting bridge for some forty miles, and the City of Portland.

Because of all of the above conditions, it is our request that the United States Air Force release its rights to the use of this property for the benefit of the people of Portland, Oregon, Vancouver, Washington, and the surrounding area. It is very important to the development of our industrial economy and port program. The Port of Portland is actually a part of the Lower Columbia Port, reaching from some forty miles east of Portland and Vancouver to the Pacific Ocean, approximately 100 miles to the west. We believe that the economy would be strengthened even though the cost to the Air Force might be increased.

May I further call your attention to the fact that there is a great deal of property just east of Portland which is affected by the fumes and vapors from the aluminum plant near Troutdale. This property is accessible to the airport without as much interference by heavily travelled arterials as encumbers the Vanport site, and it may be necessary for the government of the United States to procure this property in order to protect itself against contamination by the aluminum plant.

We know that your organization has full knowledge of many of the details as explained herein, but we do believe that upon reviewing it you will have a much clearer picture of our viewpoint. We do hope that you will agree with us and allow the City of Portland to purchase the above-mentioned property.

If you desire any further information, we will be only too glad to furnish anything that you request.

Yours sincerely,

M A Y O R

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