



City of Portland Landmarks Commission

BRIEFING MEMO

Date: December 2, 2022
To: Portland Historic Landmarks Commission
From: Staci Monroe Design Review
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Re: I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project
Landmarks Commission Briefing on December 12, 2022

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will be presenting an overview of the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement project at the upcoming December 12th hearing. The Commission was last briefed on this project back in March 2019. Since then, the project has been revised to incorporate developable highway covers among other changes.

The project is currently in an environmental study stage, which aims to fully understand the benefits and impacts of proposed changes. The Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) was recently completed and published on November 15, 2022. This assessment builds on the original environmental assessment published back on February 15, 2019 and examines the environmental effects associated with the updated "Hybrid 3" highway cover design as further developed by ODOT. All of the SEA documents can be found at i5rosequarter.org. A virtual public hearing on the SEA will occur on December 14, 2022 from 5-7:30 PM. Information can be found at odotopenhouse.org/i5-rose-quarter-sea

The presentation will include an update on the revised project, SEA conclusions, design embellishments and next steps.

OVERVIEW

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project was created by ODOT and the City of Portland, with input from the local community. In the early 1960's, during an era of highway building nationwide, the building of I-5, combined with other developments and urban renewal, disconnected the community and resulted in displacement – namely displacement of the African American community out of the central city. The well-connected street grid was disrupted, leaving limited options for crossing I-5 and the historically black Albina neighborhood physically separated from other neighborhoods. The original project scope has been revised since 2019 as a result of the [Independent Highway Cover Assessment](#) and community engagement.

The goals of the project include reducing frequent crashes, improving travel reliability and improving community connections. The revised project includes the following improvements:

- Highway Covers that can be developed with buildings up to 6 stories.
- Local Street, Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements
- New Hancock Connection over I-5
- I-5 Southbound Off-Ramp Relocation
- Ramp-to-Ramp (Auxiliary) Lanes
- Highway Shoulders

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Environmental Assessment Historic Resource Findings - During construction, 13 properties, both historic and eligible for historic designation, could be affected by noise and vibration, increased truck traffic, traffic congestion, changes to access, increased dust, and temporary changes to the historic setting due to the presence of construction equipment, staging areas, and materials storage areas. ODOT would require construction contractors to follow a variety of best management practices to minimize these types of impacts. ODOT and FHWA have also developed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) in consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to avoid and/or minimize the potential for Project-related vibration to historic properties.

- *This conclusion reflects the expanded project area and scope as well as the newly listed National Register Historic Properties, including the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) since the 2019 assessment. Staff concurs with the conclusions. The Commission is encouraged to share any comments or concerns related to each historic property.*
- *The 13 historic properties are discussed in the [Supplemental Environmental Assessment Historic Resources](#) (also attached) and the technical reports can be viewed at i5rosequarter.org/pdfs/sea/tech_report_historic_resources_supplemental.pdf*
- *The historic status of each of these 13 properties is as follows:*
 1. *Serene Court Apartments (Eligible, Criteria A & C)*
 2. *Calaroga Terrace (Eligible, Criteria A)*
 3. *Travelodge at the Coliseum (Eligible, Criteria A & C)*
 4. *Mt Olivet Baptist Church (NRHP listed)*
 5. *Historic Railroad Corridor (Eligible, Criteria A)*
 6. *23 NE San Rafael Street (contributing resource in Eliot Conservation District and Eligible contributing resource in Eliot Historic District, Criteria A-C)*
 7. *2008 N Williams Avenue (Eligible contributing resource in Eliot Historic District, Criteria A-C)*
 8. *Charles E & Emma E Holzer House*
 9. *Beatrice Mott Reed House (Eligible, Criteria A)*
 10. *Billy Webb Elks Club/Lodge (NRHP listed)*
 11. *Sullivan Pumping Stations (Eligible, Criteria A)*
 12. *The Hazelwood/The Dude Ranch (Eligible, Criteria A & C)*
 13. *Paramount Apartment House (Eligible, Criteria A and C)*

Environmental Assessment Archeological Findings - Previously undiscovered archaeological resources could be altered, damaged, or destroyed by the operation of heavy equipment or during compaction, excavation, or grading of soils during construction and subsurface maintenance activities. Potential impacts to archaeological resources during construction would be addressed through an Inadvertent Discovery Plan and a Project-specific PA between FHWA, Oregon SHPO, and ODOT that would identify mandatory protocols to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery.

- *This conclusion reflects the expanded project area and scope. Staff concurs with the conclusions. The Commission is encouraged to share any comments or concerns.*

Connections & Placemaking - This project has a big responsibility of knitting back together neighborhoods that were separated and adversely impacted by infrastructure and civic projects of the past. While past actions cannot be undone, this project is a monumental opportunity to re-establish those physical connections as well as acknowledge the cultures and identities of the past, present and future communities.

- The revised project includes developable highway covers that are intended to accommodate up to 6-story buildings and outdoor spaces that will support the existing and future Albina community.

To fulfil the goals identified in the [Independent Cover Assessment](#) parcels need to be of adequate size and shape to produce contextual, urban development. City Staff are discussing the challenges and opportunities to create such parcels on the highway covers with ODOT. In addition, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) is about to initiate a Community Framework Agreement to further assess the type and governance of future development on the highway covers.

- *Staff strongly encourages discussion about the size and shapes of the future parcels to ensure contextual urban development can be accommodated as envisioned in the Independent Cover Assessment. See the attached I5RQ Hybrid 3 Fact Sheet.*
- *The Commission should discuss when is the right time to engage and be briefed on the highway covers as concepts develop.*
- The project includes a series of infrastructure embellishments as well as future art opportunities and activating the undersides of the highway covers. ODOT has been meeting with the Historic Albina Advisory Board (HAAB) to develop some of the embellishments (signs, column collars, noise walls and crash barrier patterns, e.g.) that reflect the community and culture that occupied this once vibrant black neighborhood.
 - *Staff encourages the Commission to provide feedback on the embellishments and discuss other opportunities to incorporate cultural design and elements throughout the project. See the attached I5RQ Embellishments handout.*

NEXT STEPS

The comment period on the Supplemental Environmental Assessment ends on January 4, 2022 at 5pm. Depending on the extent of the discussion at the December 12th briefing, a summary of the Commission's feedback could be captured in a letter to ODOT written by the Commission or in a summary written by Staff and endorsed by the Commission.

Please contact me at (503) 865.6516 with any questions or concerns.

*Enclosures: Letter from I5RQ Project Director, Megan Channell dated 12/1/22
I5RQ Hybrid 3 Fact Sheet
SEA – Historic Resources
SEA Executive Summary
I5RQ Embellishments (excerpts from applicant presentation)
3/11/19 HLC I5RQ Briefing Summary*