

To: Barry Manning, City of Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability

From: Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon

Re: Final Report for MP2H Northeast/Hollywood Feedback & PWG Sessions

Target Group: Minority- and women-owned small business owners

In 2020 through the end of May 2021, Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) served as a Community Based Organization/grantee for the City of Portland's Montgomery Park to Hollywood (MP2H) Planning project.

As part of our work with the City's Bureau Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) under that contract, MESO conducted outreach to women- and minority-owned home-based and storefront micro- and small businesses located in communities along three routes being considered for a possible expansion of Portland's streetcar system into Northeast Portland and the Hollywood area. MESO then planned and hosted two virtual sessions where approximately 25 of those minority- and women-owned small businesses learned about the MP2H project and the proposed routes, and provided input and feedback about the routes and associated potential development. Staff from the PBOT and BPS participated in the feedback sessions, providing information and answering questions. Their involvement helped create environments during both sessions where participants felt comfortable speaking honestly and openly both about their preferred streetcar routes as well as their hopes, concerns and frustrations about possible redevelopment opportunities along those three routes.

Once the sessions were completed, MESO sent surveys developed with PBOT and BPS input to session participants to collect feedback and opinions about the proposed routes. The surveys also collected participant feedback and opinions related to issues they felt should be addressed and/or considered during possible development or redevelopment of properties along those routes

Also as part of our contract work, MESO provided a representative to participate in a Public Work Group that provided feedback on proposed streetcar alignment and development in the Northwest Industrial portion of the MP2H project. As part our role in the group, MESO would like to acknowledge the efforts of the city's representatives from PBOT and BPS. When PWG members raised concerns or questions, City staff came back to following sessions with thoughtful alternatives and options that showed concerns and feedback had been only heard, but addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MESO's interim report in 2020 focused on an analysis of input from feedback session participants. In wrapping our work on our MP2H contract, MESO would like to once again highlight several pieces of information that resulted from the feedback sessions. Some of these have already been addressed or highlighted in our interim report, but we feel they are worthy of additional comment. Others are items that, while mentioned previously, now deserve to have a deeper examination in light of current social issues or events. It is our hope PBOT, BPS and City leaders will consider our final report recommendations to ensure that future projects and development work move forward in ways that are truly and genuinely inclusive and equitable for all members of Portland's home-based and storefront micro- and small business communities.

Preference for future meeting formats with city representatives: As part of the survey provided after feedback sessions, participants were asked their preference for future meetings with city representatives, both related to MP2H and other topics. While some said they preferred online meetings, an even larger number indicated they preferred in-person events that allow for time to ask questions and receive answers. As Portland emerges from the pandemic, MESO would encourage the City and its agencies to consider in-person meetings with minority and women-owned micro- and small businesses whenever possible. Providing interpreters or options for translation as well as child care also would be recommended, depending on the neighborhoods and populations involved.

Concerns about follow-through by the City: The majority of the minority and women entrepreneurs and small business owners who participated in sessions and/or provided feedback said they appreciated the city's efforts to include them in discussions in the early stage of the project. However, they also indicated they had low expectations that the city would continue current efforts to include underserved populations and obtain their input and feedback as a long-term strategy. The reasons for those low expectations included:

- Previous experiences where the city failed to provide such follow through;
- An overall lack of faith that underserved voices and opinions will be taken seriously or truly listened to; and
- Concerns that changes in staff and city leadership will shift priorities away from current efforts focused on inclusion, diversity and equity will make current conversations moot.

In order to show a true commitment to changing city systems, policies and approaches that previously have failed to include underserved populations concerns, experiences and opinions, it will be important that the City examine and address the participant concerns.

More options for true community benefit from development/redevelopment projects: A majority of participants called for the City and developers of property and land parcels in Portland's underserved communities to provide greater opportunities for members of those communities to become active

participants in both the shape developments take and the financial benefits realized from them. MESO encourages the city and the developers it works with to look into innovative funding strategies, such as community models of project crowdfunding, that might allow minority and women-owned small business owners to become part owners of properties and/or have a say in how profits and revenue from such projects would be reinvested in the community where the project is located. Respondents who offered these suggestions included at least two owners of commercial properties in underserved communities who said they have had difficulty accessing support and/or guidance from the city in the development of those properties.

CONCLUSION

MESO's main contract objective was to gather input from small businesses that have traditionally been underserved and underrepresented during planning for City transportation projects. While we successfully achieved that goal, as well as others defined in our contract, the fact that the sessions were held during both the pandemic and the first weeks of a growing awareness and call for increased social and racial justice, provided unexpected and insightful additions to feedback conversations and survey responses.

MESO appreciates the opportunity we were given to help the City ensure the voices of minority- and women-owned micro- and small businesses are being heard and considered for the MP2H project. It is our hope that we also have provided information that PBOT, BPS and City leaders will be able to use as a guide to increase the voices and participation of historically under-represented entrepreneurs and small business owners in order to create policies, practices and approaches that support and promote and ensure greater equity and inclusion.