



# CITY OF PORTLAND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



1120 SW Fifth Ave, Suite 613, Portland, Oregon 97204 ■ Mingus Mapps, Commissioner ■ Dawn Uchiyama, Director

## M E M O R A N D U M

**September 15, 2023**

**TO:** Bill Cunningham, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Tom Armstrong, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Patricia Diefenderfer, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

**FROM:** Marie Walkiewicz, Bureau of Environmental Services

**COPY:** Elisabeth Reese Cadigan, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Kate Hibschman, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Virginia Bowers, Bureau of Environmental Services

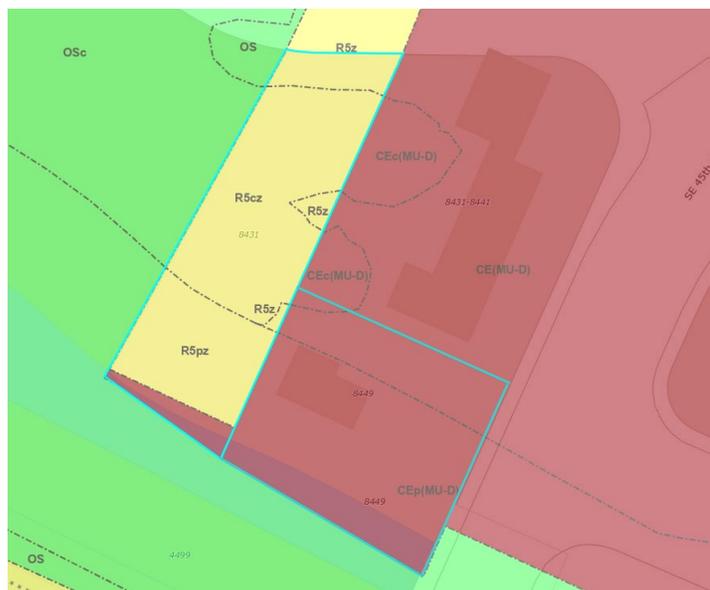
**RE: OS Zoning Request as part of Lower SE Rising**

The Bureau of Environmental Services requests that three City-owned properties be rezoned to Open Space (OS) as part of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan. Two of the properties are adjacent to one another and will be referred to as the SE 45<sup>th</sup> PI properties. The other property is located off SE Harney Street, east of 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The following memo outlines BES' request to rezone these properties and explains how the rezoning will support Johnson Creek floodplain restoration efforts as well as the residents and businesses in Lower Southeast neighborhoods.

### Sites to be Rezoned

#### SE 45<sup>th</sup> PI

R#: R158244 & R158245  
Current Zoning: CE and R5  
Proposed Zoning: OS  
Ownership Status: BES



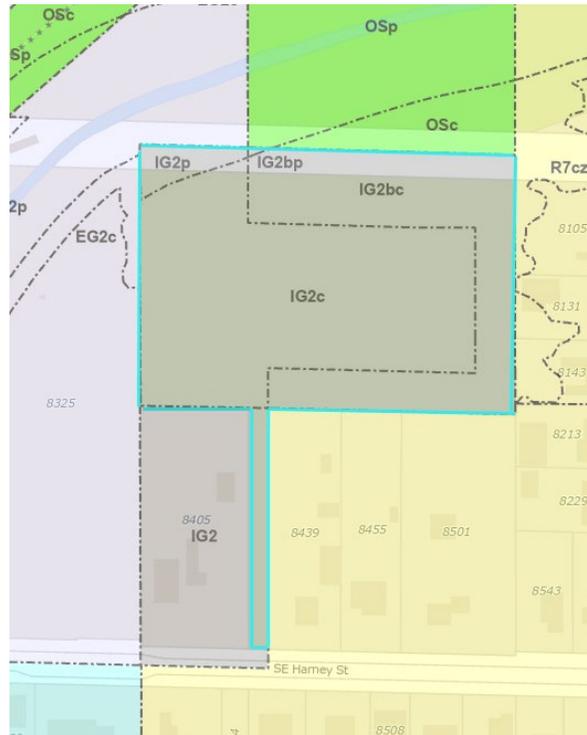
## SE Harney Street

R#: R146042 and ROW to the north

Current Zoning: IG2

Proposed Zoning: OS

Ownership Status: BES



### **Explanation**

BES acquired these properties because of their value as natural infrastructure due to their proximity to Johnson Creek as well as their value as floodplain and riparian buffer areas. The sites should be rezoned to OS to better reflect the functions they provide or will provide to the community following restoration.

Regarding floodplain coverage, the SE 45<sup>th</sup> PI property is almost entirely covered by the mapped FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area. For the SE Harney property, the FEMA map shows the northeastern third of the property in the flood hazard area. However, BES modeling indicates that the mapped flood hazard area may be inaccurately mapped on this site. Under current conditions, BES' model shows the site being substantially inundated during the 25-year and 100-year flood. During a 100-year event, the model estimates inundation of 3-4 feet depth.

Johnson Creek is an important component of the stormwater conveyance system in this area of southeast Portland. Runoff from development and streets flows overland or through pipes into Johnson Creek, which acts as the natural stormwater conveyance in this area. Due to the area's flat topography, there are ongoing flooding issues in the areas where these properties are located. BES invests in floodplain restoration to reduce the impacts of frequent flooding on community members, their properties, and the streets they use. Management and restoration of these properties as natural areas helps preserve important floodplain areas, helping to reduce impacts of flooding.

The vegetated riparian buffers along Johnson Creek provide important ecological and stormwater functions to the watershed and surrounding neighborhoods. Riparian areas absorb, intercept, and store stormwater, thus helping to reduce downstream flooding; facilitate chemical cycling, which contributes to water quality improvements; trap and transport sediments; alter or absorb pollutants; provide essential habitat for plants and animals; and strongly influence the health of downstream waterbodies. BES has a regulatory obligation on behalf of the City to protect the water quality of Johnson Creek, which includes preventing

pollutants in stormwater from entering the creek. Management and restoration of these properties as natural areas helps support these responsibilities and regulatory obligations.

The **SE Harney property** is adjacent to the BES [West Lents Floodplain Restoration Project](#). The purpose of the West Lents Project is to mitigate the impact of flooding on nearby properties and public facilities, improve water quality, and enhance habitat for ESA-listed salmonids and other native wildlife. The stormwater management and flood mitigation functions of this project and the SE Harney property will reduce flooding on a neighborhood of industrial and mixed residential uses, including a manufactured home park and apartment complexes located next to Johnson Creek and within FEMA's 100-year floodplain. The census tract where the project is located ranks in the top quintile citywide for vulnerability according to BPS's [Economic Vulnerability Assessment](#), ranking more vulnerable than the Portland population overall for percent of people of color, percent of Black and Indigenous residents, percent of residents with less than a 4-year degree, and adjusted household income.

The **45th PI property** is located in a flood-prone industrial and residential neighborhood. It will be incorporated into the [Johnson Creek Oxbow Restoration Project](#), which will reconnect Johnson Creek and Errol Creek with their natural floodplains to improve water quality, reduce flood risk in the surrounding neighborhood, and provide habitat for ESA-listed salmon, birds and other wildlife. This property and the restoration project are located at the edge of a census tract that ranks as vulnerable by the BPS's Economic Vulnerability Assessment, ranking more vulnerable than the Portland population overall for percent of people of color, percent of residents with less than a 4-year degree, and adjusted household income.

Management and restoration of these three properties not only provides important utility and ecological functions, it also provides equity benefits to vulnerable residents and businesses in the floodplain who may face significant challenges in managing the impacts of flooding.

Rezoning of these properties as open space supports the Lower Southeast Rising goals of investing in green spaces within the district. In addition, these natural areas support cooling and cleaner air, helping to mitigate impacts from nearby developed areas and improve urban heat islands. As identified in the Lower Southeast Rising Plan, contact with healthy natural environmental supports a variety of physical and mental health outcomes. Therefore, this proposal contributes to multiple plan goals. In addition, these rezonings will also support the City's equity and anti-racism goals by reducing risks to vulnerable communities.

Given the limited development potential of these sites, we think that rezoning the properties to OS is appropriate. Restoring and protecting these sites as open space will contribute to the overall wellbeing of these neighborhoods by providing critical utility functions and mitigating flood impacts on nearby properties, industrial businesses, and vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your support of BES' involvement in the Lower Southeast Rising Plan. We appreciate BPS's commitment to integrating infrastructure considerations into planning for Portland's future.