



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 20, 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: Proposed OS Zoning as part of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan

This memo provides documentation for requests Bureau of Environmental Services made to Bureau of Planning and Sustainability during the Lower Southeast Rising technical review process to rezone multiple City-owned properties to Open Space (OS). We appreciate BPS incorporating our requests into the Proposed Draft and offer the information below that identifies the specific properties proposed for rezoning, relevant site conditions, and the reasons for BES' requests.

Explanation

The proposed rezonings support Johnson Creek floodplain restoration efforts in two parts of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan area, both of which are target areas for restoration, as identified in the [Johnson Creek Restoration Plan](#). One set of proposed rezonings is located in the Tideman Johnson Target Area near SE 45th Avenue and Harney Street and will support the [Johnson Creek Oxbow Restoration Project](#) and restoration associated with improvements at [Errol Heights Park](#). The other proposed rezonings are located in the West Lents Target Area near SE 82nd Avenue and the Springwater Corridor Trail and will support the [West Lents Floodplain Restoration Project](#).

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 were proposed for rezoning to OS to better reflect the functions they provide or will provide to the community following restoration.

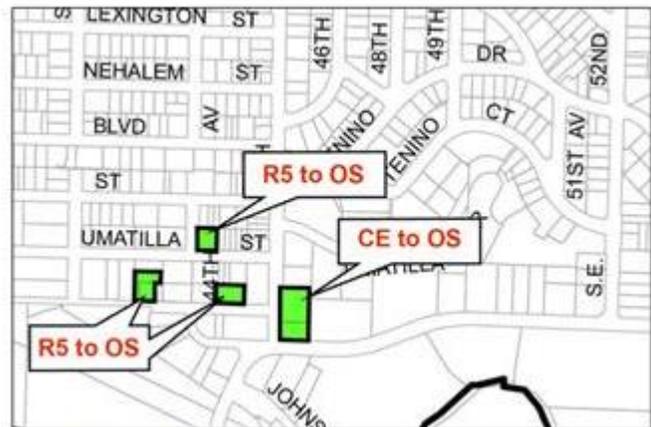
Johnson Creek is an important component of the City's stormwater conveyance system in southeast Portland. Runoff from development and streets flows overland or through pipes into Johnson Creek, which acts as the natural stormwater conveyance system. Due to the topography in the target areas, there are ongoing flooding issues. BES invests in floodplain

restoration to protect water quality, enhance habitat, manage frequent flooding, and reduce flood risks to homes, businesses, and transportation infrastructure.

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 local 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.

Oxbow/Tideman Johnson Target Area: Properties in this flood-prone industrial and residential neighborhood will be incorporated into the [Johnson Creek Oxbow Restoration Project](#) and the improvements at [Errol Heights Park](#). Restoration efforts 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 target area and the restoration project are located at the edge of a census tract that ranks them as vulnerable by the BPS's [Economic Vulnerability Assessment](#) due to the proportion of residents who are people of color, have less than a 4-year degree, and have lower adjusted household incomes.

The following tables and maps identify the properties that were proposed for OS zoning in the Proposed Lower Southeast Risking Plan. All of the properties except one are within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard area (also known as the 100-year floodplain) and three have environmental overlay zones.



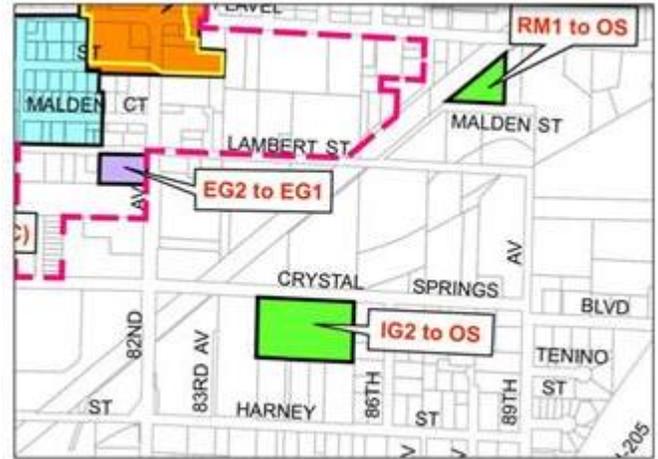
R #	Address	Current zoning	Flood-plain
R158240	8330 SE 45 th St	CEp	Y
R158238	8440 SE 45 th St	CEp	Y
R274999	4427 SE Harney	R5pz	Y
R274964	4407 SE Umatilla	R5	N
R274991	4317 SE Harney	R5	Y
R274986	4311 SE Harney	R5	Y

West Lents Target Area: This area includes the BES [West Lents Floodplain Restoration Project](#), which will reduce flooding, improve water quality, and enhance habitat for ESA-listed salmonids and other native wildlife. The stormwater management and flood mitigation functions of the restoration project and other City-owned properties in the area will reduce flooding in 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 due to the proportion of residents who are people of color, Black and Indigenous residents, have less than a 4-year degree, and have lower adjusted household incomes.

This table and map identify the properties that were proposed for rezoning to OS. Both properties have environmental overlay zones and are within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard area (also known as the 100-year floodplain).

R #	Address	Current zoning	Flood-plain
R154074	SE Malden & Springwater Trail	RM1pc	Y
R146042	8400 block of SE Harney	IG2pc	Y

On the SE Harney property, the FEMA floodplain 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.



Conclusion

Restoring and protecting these sites as Open Space will contribute to the overall wellbeing of Lower Southeast neighborhoods by providing critical utility functions and mitigating flood impacts on nearby properties, industrial businesses, and vulnerable residents, who may face significant challenges in managing the impacts of flooding.

The proposed rezoning also supports multiple Lower Southeast Rising Plan goals and the City's equity and anti-racism goals. Investing in green spaces within the district will contribute to cooler summer temperatures and cleaner air, helping mitigate the urban heat island impacts from nearby development. As identified in the Lower Southeast Rising Plan, contact with natural environments support a variety of positive physical and mental health outcomes, reducing public health and safety risks to vulnerable communities.

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.