

Portland Planning Commission

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Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners,

The Portland Planning Commission is pleased to forward the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan Recommended Draft for your review and consideration for adoption. The Lower Southeast Rising (LSER) Area Plan was a joint effort by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to address land use and transportation issues in an area of southeast Portland that has few commercial services and lacks complete transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks and safe street crossings. The LSER Plan focuses on the Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood and nearby areas, including parts of the Woodstock, Mt. Scott-Arleta, and Lents neighborhoods.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Proposed Draft on October 10, 2023, followed by a work session on November 14, 2023, when the Commission voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the Plan to City Council. The Commission supported staff's proposals and incorporated a minor mapping amendment based on public testimony. The Commission appreciates the Plan's approach of using both land use and transportation tools to address community interest in making it easier and safer to access local destinations and services.

Key Components of the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan Recommendations

The Plan includes recommended zone changes to expand opportunities for more neighborhood businesses and affordable housing options, paired with transportation improvements. With the goal to make it easier for people to meet their daily needs locally and address housing affordability. Plan proposals include:

- **Designation of a Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood center**, with zone changes to allow for a neighborhood business district to serve as a hub for commercial services, along with expanded multi-dwelling zoning nearby to allow for more people to live close to services.



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- **Zone changes along transit corridors** to allow a greater diversity of housing, including more affordable options.
- **Recommendations for transportation projects** to make it safer and easier to walk, bike and take transit in the area. The plan prioritizes busier streets for safety improvements and transit. The plan also includes neighborhood greenway projects to fill in gaps in the area’s pedestrian and bicycle networks to provide safe connections to parks, schools, and other community destinations.
- **Community stabilization approaches**, implemented through a zoning strategy that supports the area’s existing low-cost apartments and manufactured home parks. The Plan also recommends future implementation strategies to support housing and economic stability.
- The proposed land use changes are implemented by the Plan’s recommended amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map, as well as related amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Framework and Zoning Code maps.
- The proposed transportation projects and street classification changes will be incorporated into the next update of the Transportation System Plan.

Issues of Note

There was a large degree of support for the LSER Area Plan proposals among Planning Commissioners. The Planning Commission’s deliberations focused on the following issues:

Community stability

Among the public testimony heard by Planning Commissioners was a concern that zone changes to allow more multi-dwelling housing could destabilize the community and result in the loss of relatively affordable ownership housing. The Planning Commission believes that the Plan takes an appropriate approach to expanding housing options while addressing community stability. From a broad policy perspective, a failure to expand housing opportunities leads to a constrained supply of housing, higher housing prices, and additional displacement. The specific community stability strategies in the LSER Area Plan include:

- The majority of the area’s zoning will remain single-dwelling zoning, with zone changes to allow multi-dwelling housing focused strategically in the proposed neighborhood center and along transit corridors where residents will be close to services and transit.
- Zone changes avoid existing unregulated low-cost apartments and manufactured home parks to avoid adding to redevelopment pressures.
- Zone changes are primarily to low-rise multi-dwelling zoning, which does not increase displacement risk compared to current zoning and provides additional options for ownership housing.
- The Plan also includes a Community Stabilization section with recommendations for future actions to support community economic development and affordable housing investments, such as through consideration of a Tax Increment Finance district for the area, that the Planning Commission urges the City to consider moving forward.



Transportation improvements

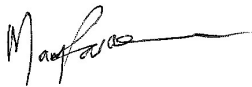
The Planning Commission heard testimony concerned about the urgent need for transportation safety improvements at specific locations in the area. Analysis by staff indicates that all locations identified in the testimony are included in the Plan's transportation project recommendations. The Commission believes the Plan's transportation project recommendations address issues identified by the community and achieve a good balance between safety improvements on busy corridors and improvements on quieter neighborhood streets.

In conclusion, the Planning Commission recommends the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan for adoption by City Council. The Recommended Plan's aligns land use map amendments with recommended transportation projects to address the plan area's longstanding lack of commercial services and gaps in transportation infrastructure. The Plan will enable community's vision of a safe, accessible, affordable "complete neighborhood."

Finally, the Planning Commission would like to extend its gratitude to all those who contributed to the Plan, including the Plan's community advisory committee, the many community members who participated in the plan process or provided testimony, and City staff and agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of this project and for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Mary-Rain O'Meara
Chair

