



## **Bureau of Planning and Sustainability**

Floodplain Resilience Project

Focus Group: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) - **Black, African, African American**

**Key Findings Report** | April 29, 2022

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### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) partnered with Camille E. Trummer Consulting to promote the Floodplain Resilience Plan to key stakeholders — a project designed to reduce the impacts of future flooding on residents and prevent the degradation of floodplain habitat for endangered fish species. To deepen our understanding of stakeholder concerns, benefits, and potential challenges of a City-led mitigation banking program, BPS and Camille E. Trummer co-designed and implemented a caucused focus group with Black, African, and African American participants. During the focus group, Camille E. Trummer led facilitation in order to:

- 1) Inform participants about the Floodplain Resilience Plan and associated mitigation banking efforts
- 2) Understand participant concerns about future flooding and the floodplain management proposals
- 3) Solicit input on the benefits and potential challenges of a City-led mitigation banking program
- 4) Identify programs and/or actions the City could implement to address concerns and potential impacts, especially for Black, African, and African American communities

### **HIGH-LEVEL DISCOVERY FINDINGS (AT A GLANCE)**

- Participants were challenged by the concept of floodplains and asked for clarification on the function, location, and potential impacts of floodplains on properties across Portland.
- Discussing the impacts of future flooding enabled participants to tap into their collective memory about recent and historical Portland floods—including the Vanport flood that directly impacted their families and loved ones.

- Fear of displacement in response to new plans and proposals was a key theme throughout the focus group discussion. Participants are fearful of City-led proposals that may inadvertently lead to property upgrade requirements that could, overtime, translate to displacement for low-income homeowners, particularly elderly populations.
- Overall the new Floodplain Resilience Plan proposal didn't generate any concerns from participants, although because of its technical nature, it may have been challenging for participants to understand and/or identify potential concerns during the focus group.
- Several programs and actions were recommended in order to reduce potential impacts on Black, African, and African American households in response to forthcoming floodplain and mitigation banking proposals, including:
  - Create a City-led technical assistance program to provide education, tools, and resources for homeowners to help protect their property in the event of a flood
  - Provide grants to offset the costs of upgrading or weatherizing homes or to be in compliance with FEMA insurance requirements for properties in or near floodplains
  - Promote floodplain education and preparation programs to businesses in the Columbia Corridor as a job stabilization and resilience strategy for lower wage workers
- Participants were able to connect the potential impacts of future flooding with a need for a clear, streamlined emergency response plan and culturally-specific implementation strategies. Several voices in the focus group expressed feelings of concern and anxiety around the City not having an emergency response strategy specific to flooding.
- Although not directly related to the Floodplain Resilience Plan or proposals, participants encouraged Portland's Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM) to consider creating emergency response plans for specific areas of the city. Additional strategic direction included:
  - Achieve alignment across City, county and regional emergency management agencies to ensure emergency response plans and protocols are synced, streamlined, updated every 5 years, and easy to follow in the event of an emergency including a flood
  - Ensure all emergency response plans, strategies, materials, and public outreach efforts center populations with the highest likelihood of being impacted—particularly elderly BIPOC communities and individuals who speak languages other than English
  - Assign areas across the city as designated "resource zones" and supply those areas with sustainable emergency response essentials such as water, blankets, nonperishable food, and first-aid kits
  - Deliver regular, ongoing communications about the City's emergency response strategies and how residents can prepare for catastrophic events like a flood, public health crisis, or earthquake
  - Create and distribute annual or bi-annual linguistically accessible toolkits to community-based organizations (CBOs) and direct service providers to cultivate

peer-to-peer flood preparedness educational opportunities and mutual aid strategies across communities

- Develop a emergency response steering committee comprised of individuals with direct flood experience (i.e., Katrina survivors now living in Portland) to solicit their strategic guidance on the development of city-wide emergency response plans and strategies

## **NEXT STEPS**

The focus group findings included in this memo help set the stage to integrate stakeholder feedback into the Floodplain Resilience Plan and any forthcoming proposals related to mitigation banking. In addition, key findings directly related to emergency response should be shared with PBEM to facilitate multi-bureau alignment and strategies that meet community needs in the event of a catastrophic event like a flood, public health crisis, or earthquake. In the coming weeks, Camille E. Trummer Consulting will align with the BPS team to support the prioritization of ideas/actions offered in this memo and as they relate to feedback gathered during forthcoming focus groups with other populations including Urban Natives and organizational leaders focused on environmental policy and justice. I look forward to working closely with the BPS team to determine our next set of actions in alignment with the project scope and budget.