



## **PORTLAND HARBOR COMMUNITY COALITION**

### **York Work Group: York Urban Village Concept**

**March 28, 2023**

Northwest Plan District Discussion: Montgomery Park to Hollywood  
Transit, Land Use & Equitable Development Strategy

#### **York Work Group Members**

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## SUMMARY STATEMENT

Portland Harbor Community Coalition (PHCC) established the York Street Work Group. Through The York Street Work Group program, PHCC provided expert advice and culturally-sensitive community engagement services to the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) for the Montgomery Park to Hollywood project (MPH2), a transit and land use development strategy for a new transit-oriented, mixed-use district in NW Portland, west of Highway 30 between NW Vaughn and NW Nicolai streets. Land use opportunity between Vaughn and Nikolai is roughly analogous to the transformation of Pearl District, which started in the 1990s.

The York Street Work Group convened an intergenerational group of community members, activists, historians, and business representatives to advise on (1) elevating equitable development and public benefits related to the MP2H NW Portland Plan, (2) exploring constraints, conditions, and opportunities for elevating the History of York, Black History in Oregon and others such as Sacagawea and tribal perspectives.

York Work Group's process should be prioritized by the City of Portland. The City's proposed streetcar expansion for MP2H should be developed after the planning, funding, and construction of **York Urban Village**. In other words, the new streetcar line must not be funded and constructed until the communities can be assured that we see results of the community benefits we seek and that align with City of Portland goals. This is a large part of breaking the institutional racist planning cycles. In addition, where appropriate, there should be an environmental justice analysis.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

York, an American enslaved African, the manservant of William Clark, and a member of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery, became the first documented person of African descent to visit present-day Portland, Oregon. York was the son of two enslaved Africans named Rose and "old York" and was inherited by Lewis Meriweather by his father in 1799. York, with his master, William Clark, and their companions, explored the western two-thirds of North America in 1804-1806. On their return trip, Clark found the "Moltnomar" or "Mutlnomah" river, his term for the Willamette. On 3 April 1806, York was among the group who paddled as far upstream to the site of the University of Portland before rejoining the main party. York's skills included hunting, knowledge of French, and significant physical strength. Standing over six feet tall, York was popular among the native tribes who preserved his memory in Northwest Native American legends. Despite York's vast contribution to the expedition, York did not receive 320 acres of land and double pay awarded to the other Corps of Discover members. It was some years before Clark gave York his freedom (along with horses and wagon) as he requested after the expedition.

## YORK URBAN VILLAGE CONCEPT

The following section outlines the vision for York Urban Village Concept, a justice- and climate-centered transit and land use development strategy and cultural heritage district along York Street. The new Cultural Heritage District will connect the City of Portland Comprehensive Plan anti-displacement and equity goals with the 2019 Racial Equity Analysis of the NW Streetcar Expansion. The land use strategy will address racial and economic disparities. The Cultural Heritage District will honor York and his participation in the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery.

York Village honors its namesake; York, a Black explorer and enslaved member of the Lewis and Clark Discovery Corp, was the first documented person of African descent to visit what would become Portland, Oregon. York Urban Village is an equitable mixed-use district designed as an intergenerational/multigenerational, age-friendly, climate solutions-focused community. Community land ownership, wealth building opportunities and anti-displacement strategies are highly valued and materialized in the community design and governance structure.

A strong sense of community and collective identity centering on Black culture and heritage inspires York Village's physical design, connective transportation network, intergenerational/multigenerational housing types, affordable commercial opportunities, communal center, day centers, and open space. Equitable climate resiliency and environmental justice are other prominent physical design and grounds features. The following section provides more details about the objective of the components of the York Urban Village Concept.

### 1. Intergenerational/Multigenerational

**Objective:** Create intergenerational and multigenerational places and spaces where all ages benefit from engaging with each other and helping one another to thrive. This concept can be materialized through mixed-income housing, family-friendly, multigenerational housing, and green space/open space and climate friendly construction accessible to all abilities.

### 2. Variety of Affordable Housing Choices

**Objective:** Homeownership is prioritized. Affordable rental housing is not expected as a permanent solution, but a place of transition to homeownership or other wealth creation models that must also be included in the York Urban Village.

The Village includes a variety of housing types and does not separate by age group or income. Mixed-income, intergenerational housing and single-family options are favored, allowing opportunities for accessible engagement with the elderly, youth and adults, and residents of all income levels.

### 3. Communal Spaces/Gathering Places

**Objective:** A centerpiece of the York Urban Village is a creative communal and/or gathering place that may materialize as a **York Black Heritage Museum** that honors York's contribution to American History and Black History in Portland, Oregon and the Northwest.

#### 4. Urban Green and Open Space

**Objective:** Accessible, safe, green, and open space that is enjoyed by all abilities and all ages. Building features could include an Eco-roof, solar panels, sustainable energy, sustainable materials, etc.

#### 5. Affordable Commercial and Job Development

**Objective:** Affordable commercial opportunities and access to nearby livable wage jobs are prioritized within the proposed streetcar expansion.

#### 6. Environmental and Climate Resiliency

**Objective:** Ensure that new housing, commercial, open spaces, etc., within former industrial areas are climate and environmental health-centered.

#### 7. Anti-Displacement Strategies

**Objective:** Anti-Displacement strategies developed by the City of Portland, embedded in the City's comprehensive plan and in the 2019 Racial Equity Analysis of the NW Streetcar Expansion should be central to a Streetcar Expansion. York Urban Village's governance policies will institutionalize anti-displacement strategies, and will include prospective residents.

#### 8. York Street Cultural District

**Objective:** Memorializing York and his contribution to the Corps of Discovery. The memorial on or near York Street, or along the Streetcar route can include the following, but are not limited to:

- York Statue
- Culturally-centered public art along the streetcar route
- Community-centered collective space such as a York Heritage Museum

#### 9. Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA) & Other tools

**Objective:** The City of Portland recently adopted the RWEA, that more robust community benefits standards than the City's existing Community Benefits Agreement

(CBA) resolution. All development related to York Urban Village concept and a future streetcar expansion should include community stakeholders in the formation of the specific RWEA or CBA to be negotiated and agreed upon prior to the bidding of contractors occurs. A sample of some of the themes of the RWEA or CBA would include:

- Resident-controlled governance structure
- Ownership opportunities goals
- Management and Maintenance
- Affordable commercial tenanting DBE goals
- DBE contracting & workforce goals for all phases of the design, development and ongoing operations
- Climate design standards for construction, re-greening the industrial zone, and restoring access to the Willamette River
- Community oversight committee to ensure the implementation of the agreement that focuses on finding solutions and problem solving, with backup enforcement mechanisms built into the agreement

## 10. Building Generational Wealth thru Land Ownership

- **Home and Land Ownership Models**
  - Community Land Trust [Proud Ground - Permanently Affordable Homeownership - Oregon & SW Washington](#)
  - Affordable private homeownership
  - Housing Trust Fund (HTF) [Housing Trust Fund | HUD.gov / US Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
  - Home retention services ([HOME | AAAH](#))
  - Portland Community Reinvestment Initiative <https://pcrihome.org/>
- **Commercial Properties (near Transit Centers)**
  - Commercial Condos [Alberta Commons – Prosper Portland](#)
  - Affordable Tenanting Opportunities, i.e., daycare, retail, and office spaces
- **Community Investment Trust (CIT)**
  - CIT for community ownership of commercial space with low-cost investment, i.e., Mercy Corp at 122<sup>nd</sup> [Community Results \(investcit.com\)](#)