



# CITY OF PORTLAND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



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

**September 20, 2023**

**TO:** Portland Planning Commission

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

**COPY:** Bill Cunningham, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Elisabeth Reese Cadigan, Bureau of Environmental Services

**RE: Amendment request: Lower Southeast Rising Plan  
Rezone BES properties to OS**

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The Bureau of Environmental Services requests that two City-owned properties be rezoned to Open Space (OS) as part of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan. This communication outlines BES' request to rezone these properties and explains how the rezoning will support Johnson Creek floodplain restoration efforts and improve conditions for residents and businesses in the Lower Southeast Rising Plan area.

## **Explanation**

The proposed rezonings support Johnson Creek floodplain restoration in part of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan area. They are located within the Tideman Johnson Target Area, as identified in the [Johnson Creek Restoration Plan](#). The requested rezonings will support the [Johnson Creek Oxbow Restoration Project](#) and restoration associated with improvements at [Errol Heights Park](#).

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 bureau requests that they be rezoned 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 area, 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

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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.

**Requested rezoning to Open Space**

Restoration efforts in this area 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.

Management and restoration of these properties will also provide equity benefits to vulnerable residents and businesses in the floodplain who may face significant challenges in managing the impacts of flooding. The Tideman Johnson target area and the Oxbow Restoration Project are located at the edge of a census tract that ranks 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.

This table and map identify the properties that we are requesting for rezoning in the Proposed Lower Southeast Rising Plan. Both properties border Johnson Creek, have environmental overlay zones, and are within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard area (also known as the 100-year floodplain).

R #	Address	Current zoning	Floodplain
R158244	8449 SE 45 <sup>th</sup> PI	CEp	Y
R158245	8431 WI/SE 45 <sup>th</sup> PI	R5pcz CEp	Y



**Conclusion**

Restoring and protecting these sites as Open Space will contribute to the overall wellbeing of the Lower Southeast Rising 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 considering BES’ request to rezone these properties as part of the Lower Southeast Rising Plan. We appreciate the commission’s commitment to integrating infrastructure and natural resource considerations into planning for Portland’s future.