

YORK URBAN VILLAGE CONCEPT

YORK STREET WORK GROUP

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

Portland Harbor Community Coalition (PHCC) convened community members and supported the formation of the York Street Work Group. The York Work Group provided community expertise to inform the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) concerning 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. The land use opportunity between NW Vaughn and NW Nicolai Street is roughly analogous to the transformation of Pearl District, which started in the 1990s.

The York 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. The following section provides an historical background and the York Work Group's vision of a York Urban Village.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

York, an enslaved African and member of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery, became the first documented person of African descent to visit what would become Portland, Oregon. York was the son of two enslaved Africans named Rose and "Old York" and the inheritance of Lewis Meriweather by his father in 1799. With his master, William Clark, and their companions, York explored the western two-thirds of North America in 1804-1806. On their return trip home, Clark found the "Moltnomar" or "Multnomah" river, his term for the Willamette. On April 3, 1806, York was among the group who paddled 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 remembered among the native tribes who preserved his story in Northwest Native American legends. Despite York's vast contribution to the expedition, York did not receive the 320 acres of land and double pay awarded to the other Corps of Discovery members. It was some years before Clark granted 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-centered, land use development strategy, and a cultural heritage district along York Street. The new community will connect the City of Portland Comprehensive Plan anti-displacement goals and equity goals in alignment with the 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 member of the Lewis and Clark Discovery Corp, who 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 community where land ownership and anti-displacement 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 features of the physical design and grounds. The following section provides more details about the objective of the York Urban Village Concept components.

1. York Street Cultural District

Objective: Memorializing York and his contribution to the Corps of Discovery. The memorial along and around York Street should include the following, but not limited to:

1. Communal Gathering Places - A centerpiece of the York Urban Village and York Street Cultural District is a **York Black Heritage Museum** that honors York's contribution to American History and Black history in Oregon and the NW region.
2. Prominent York Statue
3. Interactive public art along York Street and district
4. Create an innovative communal or gathering place dedicated to interpreting and memorializing the history of York and his contributions to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

2. Intergenerational/Multigenerational Urban Village

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

3. Variety of Affordable Housing Choices

Objective: Prioritized homeownership. Affordable rental housing **is not expected as a permanent situation but a place of transition to homeownership.** Affordable rental

housing should not be the primary community benefit because it perpetuates poverty and multigenerational instability for BIPOC communities.

The Village includes various housing types and should not be separated by age groups or income. Mixed-income, intergenerational housing, and single-family options are favored, allowing organic engagement with the elderly, youth and adults, and residents of all income levels.

4. Building Generational Wealth thru Land Ownership

Objective: This is the number one priority for the York Street Group.

1. Home and Land Ownership Models

- a. Community Land Trust (CLT) **Example:** [Proud Ground - Permanently Affordable Homeownership - Oregon & SW Washington](#)
- b. Affordable private homeownership
- c. Housing Trust Fund (HTF) **More info:** [Housing Trust Fund | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
- d. Home retention services, especially for the elderly, **Example:** ([HOME | AAAH](#))

2. Commercial Properties (near Transit Centers)

- a. Commercial Condos, **Example:** [Alberta Commons – Prosper Portland](#)
- b. Affordable Tenancing Opportunities, i.e., daycare, retail, and office spaces
- c. Support start-up businesses.

3. Community Investment Trust (CIT)

- a. CIT for community ownership of commercial space with low-cost investment, i.e., Mercy Corp at 122nd. **More info:** [Community Results \(investcit.com\)](#)

5. Urban Green and Open Space

Objective: Create an accessible, safe, green, and open space and landscaping enjoyed by all abilities and all ages. Building features should also include green features such as eco-roofs, rooftop agriculture, solar panels, sustainable materials, etc.

6. Quality Jobs/Industrial Land Offsets

Objective: Bring quality middle-wage jobs that benefit people without college degrees to the area.

7. Environmental and Climate Resiliency

Objective: Ensure that new housing, commercial, and open spaces, within former industrial areas, are environmentally safe.

8. Anti-Displacement Strategies

Objective: Anti-Displacement strategies developed by the City of Portland are acknowledged in the Comprehensive Plan. York Urban Village's governance and policies

will institutionalize anti-displacement processes for its residents and local commercial entities.

9. Transit and Street/Transportation Improvements

Objective: York Street Work Group believes the **streetcar planning process should be slowed down and that the streetcar expansion for MP2H should be developed after the planning, funding, and construction of York Urban Village.** In other words, if there will be a new streetcar, we seek to change the traditional development process sequence. This is essential to breaking the pattern of systemic racism. The following agreements should be in place before securing funding and constructing the infrastructure for any transit project:

1. Community groups and individuals define their needs around this major infrastructure development project and enter into dialogue and future negotiations with decision-makers.
2. Community benefits should be captured in a Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA) or other binding inclusive procurement tools.
3. RWEA that guides the construction of the proposed transportation system, housing, and mixed-use development, including DBE contracting & workforce goals for all phases of the development and ongoing future operations
4. Climate design standards for construction, re-greening the industrial zone, and restoring access to the Willamette River.

CONCLUSION

Wealth creation is the main priority for the York Street Work Group and eliminating known planning and development practices that lead to displacement of existing and new vulnerable populations. The York Street Work Group believes in creating an equitable and justice-centered development; the **process should be slowed down, and the streetcar expansion for MP2H should be developed after the RWEA is signed, planning, funding, and construction of what the community desires.** In other words, the new streetcar line must not be funded and built until the communities see the results of the community benefits, **WE SEEK**. Changing the traditional development process sequence is essential to redirecting and breaking the institutional racist planning cycles.

In addition, The City should understand and respect the community's wishes to have their own meeting with property owners. York Street Work Group believes that the City of Portland should also commit to standing with the community, negotiating all future zoning code changes, plans and policies with the privately held ESCO, Montgomery Park site and any others, by prioritizing community recommendations.

