

Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA)

Collaborative Working Group (CWG) Meeting #9

May 16, 2025

Attendees

Collaborative Working Group:

Corky Collier, Columbia Corridor Association
Andrew Fitzgerald, Prosper Portland
Kate Merrill, Prosper Portland
Amanda Gallegos, Columbia Slough Watershed Council
Micah Meskel, Bird Alliance of Oregon
Sarah Taylor, Braided River
Tanya Hartnett, Working Waterfront Coalition
Alexis, CCA
Jon Isaacs, Portland Metro Chamber
Steph Routh, PPC
Sherrie Duncan, Yakima Nation Fisheries
Benton Strong, Vigor

City Staff:

Deb Meihoff, facilitator
Tom Armstrong, BPS
Sam Brookham, BPS
Julia Michel, BPS
Patricia Diefenderfer, BPS
Jeff Caudill, BPS
Daniel Soebbing, BPS
Juliet Bachtel, BPS
Kryn Sausedo, BPS
Rani Boyle, BES
Ethan Brown, BES
Belinda Judelman, UF

Observers:

Marnie Glickman, Attorney
Sarah Silkie
Tom Bouillion, Port of Portland
Debbie Silva, Oregon Steel Mills, WWC
Susie Lahsene, WWC
Hayley Watson

Recap/Overview

- Recap of CWG Purpose and Ground Rules
 - Review drafts, land use scenarios, policy choices; Set employment growth for the next 20 years
 - Not a decision-making body; importance of the group is as a collaborative group to understand tradeoffs
 - Two opportunities:
 - Early review and project feedback to allow BPS to adjust before a draft document emerges
 - Identify areas of shared interest and understanding
- CWG members were asked about their priorities for the EOA:

- Honor small business with a renewed focus on <3.0-acre parcels, particularly regarding redevelopment sites in the BLI.
- Ensure an adequate supply of industrial land.
- Meet forecasted needs, particularly for the harbor businesses.
- Support for no new industrial development constraints on existing harbor industries.
- Focus on jobs vs acreage.
- Limit industrial land conversion.
- Middle-wage jobs, particularly for disadvantaged communities.
- Making an economy for Portland that makes life better for other groups.
- Alignment of BPS' EOA with Prosper's Advance Portland – four key target sectors.
- Supporting people, plants, animals, and water quality in the Columbia Slough.
- Celebrate shared benefit.
- Write policy based on data and articulate a vision for the North Reach.
- Protection of floodplain and repairing habitat along that whole corridor for salmon and other aquatic species. Enhance and protect what might appear to be marginal habitat.
- Recap of EOA process
 - No comments.
- Project Schedule
 - **Tanya Hartnett:** will the City budget effect any of this?
 - Patricia: unlikely. We will soon look beyond the industrial areas.
 - **Jon Isaacs:** letter going to council from business groups asserting that this year's budget is the start of a multiyear total fiscal reset. We need to think about cost.

Project Updates

Portland Industrial Land Readiness Study

- **Micah Meskel:** Flagged a gap between DEQ data and privately collected due diligence where sites may have undergone remediation, but this is not reflected in public datasets. Urged better coordination between the city and state to share data and reduce uncertainty for developers.
 - **Sam:** we are using best available data from DEQ/EPA. Remediation actions by private parties that haven't been reported out or corrected in a public database are difficult to find. We do not have good solutions at this time; the best approach we have is doing windshield surveys (which is something MFA has done for the brownfield study). We could consider addressing data gaps as a future action.
- **Jon Isaacs:** Supported identifying common characteristics of underutilized sites and emphasized a need for clarity on the true scope of brownfield barriers. Stated a desire for policy prescriptions to address underutilized land. There is a perception of plentiful underutilized industrial land. Asked if the regulatory improvements we are considering will be brought before the CWG.
 - **Tom:** we will bring the results through the next phase of the work and incorporate into the EOA document as future actions.

- **Sarah Taylor:** identified how several brownfield sites have transitioned to other uses and noted the long timeline that it took to get those projects done. Asked if we are looking at alternative uses. Asked how many brownfield sites are actually contaminated. Later expressed concern that some redeveloped brownfield sites took decades to activate and should not be treated as success stories.
- **City Staff (Tom/Sam):** Noted that many PILR sites are difficult to develop even with incentives due to site prep and infrastructure costs, especially utilities and demolition. Getting a dock can also be a challenge.
- **Sherrie Duncan:** Asked how natural resources and riparian zones are factored into the PILR process and prioritization. Will there be changes to the environmental overlays as part of the PILR process?
 - **Sam:** we are incorporating the existing and medium scenario ezones into the model but will not be making recommendations to change these ezones as that is a separate project. The other regulatory improvements need to be further identified but they are likely to touch on the entitlement process and zoning code.
 - **Daniel:** we are doing an environmental overlay code project in partnership with the EOA.

Brownfield Inventory Study

- **Sarah Taylor:** asked if the brownfield study included superfund sites and noted the cost of the in-water liability as part of the upland site redevelopment. Pointed out that recent brownfield projects provide entry-level jobs and asked whether those were part of the analysis.
 - **Corky:** Stated that Superfund-related cleanups have been delayed too long and questioned whether upland sites could proceed independently from the in-water contamination to get jobs back.
 - **Tom:** we have been tracking the superfund efforts for the 18 different sites. We're monitoring the cleanup designs with a focus on making sure future uses are not blocked (e.g., docks and marine industrial uses), especially for sites near the most viable industrial development sites.
- **Sherrie Duncan:** Asked whether the city is actively engaging with EPA on coordinating upland and in-water Superfund efforts. Potential for coordinated in-water and upland cleanup efforts. Construction and cleanup for the in-water portions will occur down the road but there seems to be an opportunity to take more actions sooner.
 - **Tom:** BES is coordinating with EPA and informing us.
- **Corky Collier:** Noted that PPA (Prospective Purchaser Agreements) generally impact only in-water cleanups. Asked whether upland sites could be treated as independent clean-up areas to accelerate reuse.
- **Corky Collier:** Emphasized the purpose of the study is to identify what is blocking development and how to resolve it. Noted that alternative uses on previously cleaned up brownfield sites took much too long to get done.

Ezone Infrastructure Code Project

- **Corky Collier:** Expressed concern about how P zones (protection zones) are being mapped, especially in older parts of the Columbia Corridor where overlays appear to extend over paved or developed areas like parking lots.
 - Stated this raises questions about whether these areas can truly be considered “valuable natural spaces,” as the P zone is intended to protect.
 - Asked: “How do you resolve that?” and noted it seemed contradictory to label pavement as high-value natural habitat.
- **Tom Armstrong and Daniel Soebbing (City Staff):** 25-foot transition areas are built into both C and P zones.
 - The outer edge of the P zone may include developed areas, but there are regulatory flexibilities, such as allowing continued use of parking lots.
 - They are evaluating these cases and, where appropriate, converting mapped P zones to C zones.
 - They aim to avoid overly restricting industrial property use and are open to site-by-site revisions.
- **Corky Collier:** Recalled a recent situation where a landowner offered to donate a vegetated buffer parcel to the city. Said the City declined due to concerns about long-term maintenance costs. Argued this was a missed opportunity and should be considered a potential solution in industrial edge planning, where the city can partner to accept buffers rather than impose them unilaterally. Noted that he was concerned around the P zone to C zone conversation process.

North Reach /Floodplain Rules

- **Sarah Taylor:** Stressed the importance of community engagement in the North Reach, particularly with communities displaced historically by industrial development.
- **Sherrie Duncan:** Reiterated the ecological significance of the North Reach, particularly for salmon habitat. Urged that floodplain protections should include “marginal-looking” habitat, which may still provide critical rearing or migration functions for salmonids.
 - Asked whether the City is actively engaging with EPA and other federal agencies around Superfund design coordination and institutional controls that may affect future redevelopment potential.
- **City Staff (Tom Armstrong and Jeff Caudill):** Explained the timeline and regulatory pressures from FEMA and NMFS.
 - Clarified that pre-implementation compliance measures would be in place soon and would shape future permitting.

CEI Hub Policy Project

- **Corky Collier:** Asked whether the City would email out the reports and presentations shown at the meeting (including the CEI Hub materials).
- **City Staff (Tom Armstrong):**

- Clarified that:
- The CEI Hub project is running in parallel to the EOA but is not part of the EOA itself, because it does not change the industrial land designation.
- The City's current code prohibits new fossil fuel storage except for aviation and renewable fuels.
- The new project will consider further limits on infrastructure development and possibly update Comprehensive Plan policies and zoning code.
- The CEI Hub serves ~90% of Oregon's liquid fuel needs and is in a high-risk liquefaction zone.
- A proposed draft is expected in late 2025, with City Council action anticipated in 2026.

Industrial Edge Project Introduction

- **Jon Isaacs:** Urged transparency in distinguishing between “required” EOA elements and optional policies.
 - Emphasized that the Industrial Edge policy has no current legislative mandate and faced strong opposition in the legislature.
- **Corky Collier:** Shared concern that accounting for future decisions without details invites legal uncertainty. Warned the approach could provoke more legal conflict rather than reduce it. Criticized reliance on assumptions (e.g., emissions) without clear scientific data; noted that post-2012 diesel trucks emit less than Portland's citywide air quality average.
 - Argued the real issue is preservation, not expansion—removing industrial land increases pressure on sensitive areas like Sauvie Island.
- **Benton Strong:** Called it “highly inappropriate” to incorporate this concept into the EOA in its current form. Stated it undermines the integrity of the EOA process, which should trigger updates only after clear legislative action. Warned that projecting a future policy now is premature and risks policy overreach.
- **Kate Merrill:** Asked whether the Edge buffer concept could be integrated into the PILR study to evaluate development feasibility impacts more holistically.
- **Micah Meskel:** Don't want to downgrade the economic concerns, share economic and resiliency concerns; need to balance with human health, salmon recovery, bird population decline, livability. Framed the Edge discussion as a chance to solve multiple issues together:
 - Intensify jobs in less sensitive areas.
 - Strengthen environmental, health, and livability protections near sensitive uses.
 - Advocated for pursuing a Goal 9 exemption that would allow Portland to stop chasing industrial acreage it doesn't have.
- **Wrap up**
 - Tom: Next meeting will focus on the specific actions we can take elsewhere in the City, investments we can make, how to support small businesses.