

# Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA)

## Collaborative Working Group (CWG) Meeting #10

June 6, 2025

### Attendees

**Collaborative Working Group:**

Micah Meskel, Bird Alliance of Oregon  
Sarah Taylor, Braided River  
Tanya Hartnett, Working Waterfront Coalition  
Steph Routh, PPC  
Heather King, Willamette Riverkeeper  
Benton Strong, Vigor

**Observers:**

Marnie Glickman, Attorney  
Jessie O'Connor  
Debbie Silva, Oregon Steel Mills, WWC  
Susie Lahsene, WWC  
Hector Marquez, Historic Parkrose  
Annette Stanhook, Historic Parkrose  
Jordan Carmorse, Mitch Green  
Maria Sipin, Mitch Green

**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  
Ludwig, BES  
Marco Mejia, BPS  
Ethan Brown, BES  
Kate Merrill, Prosper Portland

### Citywide Strategy

- Tom: The EOA is about ensuring a 20-year supply of developable land aligned with Portland's 2045 growth goals and policy objectives—economic development, environmental protection, health, equity, and shared prosperity. He clarified that the CWG is not a decision-making body but plays a critical role as a sounding board to review draft materials and surface issues or shared priorities.
- Kryn presented employment data by geography and highlighted areas where employment has declined (such as Central City) and areas that have been more resilient or growing. He emphasized how the development capacity analysis helps identify which areas can support additional employment growth.
- Benton: for policy levers the city has, stoking growth in those sectors, are we thinking about growth in existing businesses? Or are we focused on growing new businesses.
  - Kryn: we are focused in on strategies but they are agnostic to land use sector. Three types of strategies will be presented and discussed: Land use/zoning, permitting, funding and programs.

- Tom: sectors represent Portland's strengths. We want to look at strategies that help existing businesses grow and thrive, and make Portland attractive to new businesses.
- Benton: this is helpful, important to ask what else has to happen in the city and amongst private partners for growth to occur.

## Central City

- The group discussed strategies to support revitalization and employment growth in the Central City. Kryn and Tom noted that the city is interested in expanding support for office-to-residential conversions, including ideas such as a "downtown conversion concierge" to streamline permitting and provide assistance for adaptive reuse projects.
- Tanya: why are we talking about the Central City and not the North Reach?
  - Tom clarified that while many discussions focus on industrial land, the EOA is a citywide effort that must address employment capacity across all areas, including Central City and neighborhood business districts. The EOA is tied to the city's long-term economic development strategy and statutory responsibilities under state planning law.
  - Kryn: at a foundational level, the EOA is a state-required analysis of land supply and demand for all employment.
  - Tanya: are we accounting for wages/job growth and living wage jobs?
  - Tom: that is the next level of detail. We have talked about middle wage, low barrier to entry jobs. To the extent that there is a broader policy question, where can we provide the same economic opportunity for people if industrial land continues to be constrained?
- Steph: hypothetically, HRR project and others waived first floor commercial. Would conversions count?
  - Kryn: that is the type of nuance we're wanting to get to
  - Tom: this process is exploring if there something more we could do to further support that.
- Micah: upzoning... would it be responsive to a proposal or proactive?
  - Tom: both. One example is the Ross Island Sand and Gravel site – are there opportunities there? This is something our Central City team is already considering.
- Kate: Enterprise Zone was expanded to include downtown
- Tanya: isn't much of this already happening?
  - Tom: we have an opportunity to reinforce and build on existing efforts while also identifying new actions. Some actions are on the Advance Portland to-do list, then there is room/opportunities for new ideas. There is a basis for many actions and the EOA can be used to highlight strategies with this new council.
  - Deb: these are strategies that will help get us towards our 20-year growth.
- Sarah: this is exciting. There are many ideas that could come out of this.
- The group also discussed the possibility of encouraging a broader mix of uses—such as light industrial and maker spaces—in CX zones, which could support small businesses and contribute to a more vibrant downtown environment. Participants saw this as aligned with

the EOA's goals of increasing access to middle-wage jobs and reactivating long-vacant buildings.

## Neighborhood Business Districts

- Benton noted that aligning employment zoning with workforce training programs is a useful exercise but cautioned that related work may already be underway at the state level. He encouraged the City to focus on identifying where the gaps are in those existing efforts and consider how local actions could complement, rather than duplicate, state initiatives.
- Steph raised concerns about specific zoning challenges in Parkrose that hinder revitalization and local business activity.
- Patricia: the EOA is not something that changes zoning itself, but it sets us up to enact policy and zoning changes
- Some members commented on the industrial edge idea.
  - Tanya: the edge project is flawed, especially for residential buildings that have been built *after* industrial uses
  - Sarah: industrial edge impacts the livability and viability of small neighborhood business districts
- Sarah: we should be having another look at the heavy industrial districts to consider how they can serve as vibrant economic districts. Neighborhood associations are underused. The City should ask NAs for feedback on housing, employment, safety, etc.;
  - Tanya: PEMO does that.
  - Annette: PEMO is great, but focuses more on community safety and less directly on economic development.
- Kryn: Prosper will be making a push to build up these business districts.
  - Kate: We have an Office of Small Business and Business Advancement Team working directly with business districts.
- Discussion of how Prosper Portland's Office of Small Business and the Business Advancement Team are engaging directly with neighborhood business districts.
- Idea floated for stronger permitting help and technical assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly those in underinvested areas.

## Campus Institutions

- The group discussed Portland's large educational and healthcare institutions, which are predominantly in Campus Institutions (CI) areas and include sites like OHSU, Providence, Legacy, Lewis & Clark, Reed College, and PCC. These areas serve as major employment centers but also raise unique land use, infrastructure, and livability issues.
- Staff explained that as part of the previous EOA update, the city established the Campus Institution zoning designation, which requires master planning but allows flexibility for long-term institutional growth. These zones reflect the deeply rooted nature of institutions that have been in place for decades or more.

- Benton: transportation and infrastructure are important considerations – connecting to workforce.
- Steph: it would be helpful to identify what we need in terms of professional uses.
- Participants emphasized the importance of better integration between campuses and surrounding neighborhoods, including:
  - Using design standards and mixed-use frameworks to soften land use transitions.
  - Supporting multimodal transportation and improving connections to reduce car dependency.

## Residential/Home-based Businesses

- Tanya: high taxes negatively impact home-based businesses
- Patricia: We slightly changed the number of employees you can have in RICAP. This process could be an opportunity to go further.
- The group acknowledged that Portland has seen significant growth in home-based businesses and microenterprises, particularly in the last five years.
- Several participants hinted at the need for funding, grants, or technical assistance to support these entrepreneurs, especially BIPOC and immigrant business owners.

## Industrial

- Several participants noted that industrial areas provide higher-wage jobs, and over 60% of Portland's middle-wage jobs are located in these areas. This reinforces the importance of preserving and supporting industrial lands.
- Sarah: Industrial areas are important but there are antiquated pieces like the industrial sanctuary. We need to be creative and look at whole systems.
- Steph: SDCs are different for large industrial uses – the impact of new development is much more significant than for residential. Does capacity have to be built out first to serve new development?
  - Tom: SDCs operate differently depending on the system. The water/sewer system is largely built already, and the cost is credited against expended funds. For transportation the funding is used for future improvements.
- Benton: policy solution is wildly different depending on where that development is occurring; Citywide policy wouldn't make sense. Capital outlay for any industrial development is so high that deferrals could be effective. Sanctuaries exist to try to segment those more significant impacts in specific places.
- Micah: City could play a role in collecting and sharing data from DEQ, EPA, prospective developers, etc.
- Benton: should be realistic about funding availability.
  - Kaitlin: BES just accepted two brownfield grants from the state for brownfields. State also released \$600m Monsanto fund
  - Sam: we are looking at payback periods for different programs.

- Benton: Do not lose sight of the main premise is identifying what we need to do to meet our projected growth
- The discussion also highlighted concerns about residential encroachment into industrial areas, and several participants advocated for more attention to industrial edge conditions, especially in zones where historic land uses now conflict with recent development.
- Micah: Consider land vacancy taxes. Appetite amongst some city council members for looking at it for residential, perhaps for industrial. Public-owned land does not generate tax revenue.

## Next steps

- July meeting to focus on industrial geographies.