

The 2035 Plan contains many commendable elements. Everyone wants to protect the environment while “growing” the economy. The core of this plan contains several contradictory and troubling elements, however. The 2035 Plan wishes to ensure commercial/industrial land for the development of 140,000 new jobs so that Portland will stay “competitive as a major West Coast trade gateway for goods traveling between the Columbia River Basin and the Pacific Rim.” At the same time, the plan expresses a hope for “a climate-ready community” and “a shift away from coal, oil, and natural gas.”

If the writers of this document are seriously concerned about climate change, they need to rethink their knee jerk boosterism for industrial development. Everyone favors jobs, but not when economic growth equates with sacrificing the environment and the health and safety of future generations. Fighting climate change is not compatible with the 2035 Plan’s notions of creating “an overall supportive business environment.” This stratagem is equivalent to inviting the fox into the chicken coop, buying more chickens, and inviting the fox to return. The public keeps paying for the chickens and the fox gets fatter and fatter.

Specifically, the 2035 Plan wishes to turn the Columbia Slough’s diverse but suffering biological community into a sacrifice zone. Golf Courses, such as the Colwood and Broadmoor, are on the industrial butcher’s block. The City has identified the Middle Columbia Slough as a sanctuary for numerous flora and fauna. The City has also emphasized that the Columbia Slough’s water needs zealous protection. The City has cataloged the Columbia Slough’s numerous endangered and threatened species. The public record emphasizes that this much-abused area is fragile, stressed, neglected, and requires environmental protection. Yet the 2035 Plan offers scant protection to the Columbia Slough’s non-human population.

Historically, the Columbia Slough has been an industrial dumping ground for countless toxic chemicals, resulting in a long-term carcinogenic cocktail that affects water, native plants, wildlife, and humans. The Columbia Slough is a witch’s brew of mercury, chlordane, selenium, arsenic, chromium, DDT, and PCBs. Industrial polluters have never been held accountable for their desecration of natural resources, yet the City’s 2035 Plan wishes to reward corporate interests with even more land to despoil. In a city that “works,” this lapse of ethical responsibility beggars the imagination. Promoting environmental vandalism is not commensurate with putting the brakes on climate change.

A moratorium needs to be placed on any more Columbia Slough industrial development. Bioswales and bicycle paths are offered up by the 2035 Plan, but this is just putting lipstick on the pig. Environmentally-precious land is still being sacrificed to the heedless developers who drive the engine of climate change. The Columbia Slough has been assaulted and defiled enough already. The City argues that the State of Oregon requires more urban land for industrial development. With little effort, any person can verify the profusion of extant Columbia Slough industrial properties. Many of these properties are vacant or underutilized. Creating more industrial property lacks economic or ecological sense; it constitutes a love letter to private business interests that leaves the public out in the cold.

Gifted Columbia Slough land to industry violates the public trust and gives the lie to the City’s own documented statements about protecting the environmental integrity of water, air, and

biologically diverse habitats. Progress is best defined by protecting the silver-haired bat, Northern red-legged frog, and tricolored blackbird—not by smashing them flat with a gigantic, city-sponsored carbon footprint. If the writers of the 2035 Plan sincerely wish to combat climate change, then the Columbia Slough needs to be protected aggressively from any kind of industrial encroachment. A “sustainable future” means protecting the Columbia Slough’s green spaces with intelligent foresight, and a deeper commitment to environmental science. The health of Portland’s citizens depends upon our civic leaders to take “the road not taken.”

Bruce Campbell

3261 NE Holland Ct.

Portland, Oregon 97211

Bruce Campbell <campbell1849@comcast.net>