

MPAC Worksheet

Agenda Item Title: Metro Council Economic Development Workgroup Update

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Purpose/Objective

The purpose of this presentation is to continue a series of discussions and presentations at MPAC in 2026 on economic development, business growth, and job creation. This month's presentation will update MPAC members on the Metro Council's internal working group on economic development and recommendations they made to the Metro Council for deliberation at a January 27th work session.

Outcome

The Metro Council work group on economic development, which has been meeting since April 2025, explored how Metro can leverage its regional planning policies, land use responsibilities, and convening role to support long-term job growth. The work group introduced four recommendations for the Council to consider:

1. Create a Job Ready Lands Program

As the steward of the region's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) with statutory land use planning authority, Metro plays a central role in determining whether the region has an adequate supply of employment land to support future job growth. The current economic issues facing the region challenge Metro and public sector partners to expand existing work to catalyze land readiness for employers to grow or relocate to the area. A Job Ready Lands program would work towards the goal of better national visibility for our region's top priority vacant and ready to develop employment land parcels by including them in a national database for site selectors. The steps towards creating a Job Ready Lands program might include:

Q1-3 2026

- Refresh buildable employment lands inventory
- Identify target industries to create a regional strategy from local EOAs and CEDS priorities

Q4 2026-Q2 2027

- Site solicitation and need assessment
- State legislative strategy for Job Ready Lands funding

2027

- Identify funding strategy

2027 and beyond

- Marketing and integration with national database

2. Launch the Housing Production Accelerator fund

The Housing Production Accelerator Fund is part of how Metro will implement the Regional Housing Coordination Strategy (RHCS) and was elevated by the Council work group as an important action to accelerate housing and support economic development and job creation. On January 8th, 2026 the Council approved Resolution 25-5540 to create the Housing Production Accelerator Fund, a one-time investment of \$5 million of CET reserves to provide funding for local partners to speed up housing development.

3. Focus the update to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to create a regional strategy for target industries

Greater Portland Inc. (GPI) and Metro are currently scoping work to do the next required update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), to be completed by the end of 2026. The work group recommends that staff coordinate with GPI to support engagement by elected and high-level private sector leaders to increase ownership and improve implementation of the actions identified in the CEDS. A critical element is a regional strategy to identify priority target industries for our region. Technical and steering groups would analyze already existing and required local economic opportunity analyses (EOAs) in the region to elevate common priorities into a regional strategy for determining which target industries align with the region's job creation and employment.

4. Integrate strategic economic development activities into Metro's planning and decision making

Economic development has always been a part of Metro's work but has not always been specifically identified as a priority. The nature of the moment we are in right now calls for clarifying the impact of our programs, policies and investments for the regional economy. The workgroup recommends the Council direct itself and staff to 1) highlight the critical role economic development plays in all of Metro's programs and activities and 2) expand Metro's presence and leadership in economic development forums, organizations, and conversations. This focus shift will help center Council and staff activities on intentional and inclusive economic development in our new and ongoing work.

What has changed since MPAC last considered this issue/item?

There has been no change or additional information shared since MPAC heard the first presentation on background economic and land use history at the January MPAC meeting.

What packet material do you plan to include?

N/A