

METRO COUNCIL

Work Session Worksheet

PRESENTATION DATE: June 26, 2018 **LENGTH:** 60 min.

PRESENTATION TITLE: Regional Investment Strategy: Parks and Nature update

DEPARTMENTS: Parks and Nature, GAPD

PRESENTER(S): Jon Blasher, jon.blasher@oregonmetro.gov, 503-797-1948
Andy Shaw, andy.shaw@oregonmetro.gov, 503-797-1763
Heather Nelson Kent, heathernelson.kent@oregonmetro.gov, 797-1739

WORK SESSION PURPOSE & DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Purpose: Present engagement plan and framework timeline for potential Parks & Nature bond
- Outcome: Staff answers Councilors' questions and describes next steps

TOPIC BACKGROUND & FRAMING THE WORK SESSION DISCUSSION

A complete quality of life in greater Portland includes a home that fits one's needs, clean air and water, easy access to nearby nature, and the ability to travel reliably and safely throughout the region.

Hundreds of people move to the region every month. As greater Portland grows, the Metro Council has recognized the need to work together as a region on reforms to make this a more livable place for all. The council also seeks to give more people more say about how to do this – particularly those who have faced barriers or discrimination.

The Metro Council has directed staff to coordinate efforts on housing, parks and nature and transportation funding in a single regional investment strategy. Since late 2017, staff have regularly updated the Metro Council on this strategy through biweekly individual briefings and monthly work sessions.

Over much of the last six months, these updates have focused primarily on affordable housing. On June 7, the Metro Council referred to voters a \$652.8 million regional affordable housing bond intended to create affordable housing for 7,500 to 12,000 people, at an average cost of \$60 annually for Portland-area homeowners.

On June 26, staff will present next steps for another major element of the Regional Investment Strategy: A potential next chapter in Metro's story of success applying voter-approved investments to improve water quality, protect wildlife habitat and increase access to nature for people. Staff will return to work session in July, to present next steps for a potential 2020 investment measure to improve roads, speed up transit and make streets safer around the region.

Parks and Nature investments: A history of support, a vital future

The natural environment is a big part of what makes greater Portland a wonderful place to live and do business. Over the past quarter century, the region's voters have passed two bond measures that allowed Metro to create a unique regional park system with nature at its heart – and two levies to care for it. With voters' support, Metro now manages 17,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas

across greater Portland, including beloved parks like Oxbow and Blue Lake, as well as lesser-known but nonetheless significant natural areas.

Metro has a strong track record of success in delivering on commitments made to voters in past Parks & Nature funding measures. With voters' ongoing support, Metro has protected clean water, restored fish and wildlife habitat, and brought nature closer to hundreds of thousands of people.

Now more than ever, protecting nature is an urgent priority in greater Portland. Our population is growing in both numbers and diversity. Development threatens treasured forests and watersheds, and parks face ever-higher demand. Climate change threatens the natural systems Oregonians have worked so hard to protect. And despite a lot of progress, some communities still need access to high-quality parks and natural areas, where kids can explore and people can gather.

Regional voters last considered a parks and nature bond in 2006. As that bond's investments are successfully completed, it's time to once again explore what we can achieve together and how to respond to changing challenges and opportunities. Among these include

At the Metro Council's direction in late 2017, staff initiated a work plan to engage partners and the community in developing a potential third parks and natural area bond measure that could carry our mission forward into a new decade. Already, the Council has directed staff that any new bond measure must have racial equity at its core and build on lessons learned through previous investments and partnerships with community partners. This means including in decision-making those communities that have been left out in the past as well as looking at how future investments can support communities of color specifically.

Future nature-focused capital investments by Metro would likely continue in three primary areas: acquiring land for the future; making overdue improvements at beloved places like Blue Lake and Oxbow parks and expanding public access to new sites as described in Metro Council-approved master plans; and supporting community nature projects through grants and local allocations.

As in the past, community and partner input will play an important role in shaping future investments in parks, trails and natural areas. Metro has already begun conversations with local governments, parks providers, conservation advocates and culturally-specific organizations about how bond investments can support community needs and how to meaningfully engage people in the process of identifying priorities today and for future generations.

In June, Metro recruits members for a stakeholder table to guide staff's development of a funding framework for the Metro Council to consider. Metro will also work in partnership with a cohort of culturally-based organizations and conservation advocates on engagement. These efforts are modeled on lessons learned from new practices developed in park master planning for Chehalem Ridge, Gabbert Butte and East Council Creek. Moving forward, staff plan tours of past parks and nature investments for the Metro Council and key partners, in addition to broader public engagement.

On June 26, staff will present a draft engagement plan for a potential parks and nature bond measure, and a timeline for discussion and decision-making toward a potential Metro Council referral in late spring 2019.

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- Does the Council have any questions or feedback for staff?

PACKET MATERIALS

- Would legislation be required for Council action Yes **X No**
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? Yes **X No**