

Date: February 28, 2020

**To: Andy Back, Manager
Planning and Development Services, Washington County, Oregon**

From: Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative

Re: Draft 2020-2021 Long Range Planning Work Program

Dear Mr. Back and LRP staff:

As members of the Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative (The REC), we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2020-21 Long Range Planning Work Program. The REC is co-convened by Coalition of Communities of Color and Vision Action Network and includes founding members Adelante Mujeres, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, and Bienestar. Our mission is to enrich and strengthen the broader Washington County community by increasing the capacity of communities of color and their level of engagement in the county. In October 2019, the Washington County Board of Commissioners included The REC in its Budget Priorities to support our mission.

While The REC does not presume to speak for all people of color in Washington County, we submit our comments in the spirit of those who are under-represented or excluded from the county's planning and decision-making, and often harmed, rather than strengthened, as a result. We encourage you to prioritize these comments as you finalize your work program, so that its long-term impacts serve to benefit communities of color and the most vulnerable residents in Washington County.

To begin, there is no question that housing and homelessness are critical issues that transcend geographic and political boundaries, and the LRP Work Program is one of many viable tools to improve outcomes for the chronically homeless and those in imminent danger of losing their homes. The REC supports the County staff recommendation to amend the Minor Comprehensive Plans Amendments Ordinance (Task S1.9) in response to the City of Beaverton's request that houseless people be allowed to safely sleep in their vehicles in designated areas beyond what current law allows. While not an ideal or a permanent solution, it represents a stop-gap measure to improve conditions for many who have no other option for shelter.

Also related to housing and pertinent to Task S1.5, services such as AirBnB have had an adverse impact on rents due to corporate real estate speculation that converts traditional rental units into higher cost, short-term dwellings. Absent barring such services altogether, The REC supports a county tax on short-term rentals with the proceeds used to support affordable housing. While this may require county partners outside of Planning and Development Services, we request that it be included for consideration as an inter-departmental, collaborative endeavor. Moreover, The REC requests that Tier 2 Task 2.7, *Homeless Shelter/services/camping regulations*, be elevated to Tier 1 status in conjunction with Task S1.5 and S1.9, and that LUT and the Department of Housing Services continue to strengthen inter-departmental coordination.

In principle, The REC strongly supports transit-oriented and community-oriented development, both of which prioritize economically disadvantaged residents who are often most negatively impacted by traditional development plans that enable gentrification and, subsequently, their displacement to regions with less access to vital goods, services, and opportunities for civic engagement. The LRP should use transit-oriented and community-oriented development lenses to ensure that its future plans put the most vulnerable residents first and create systems that ultimately benefit everyone.

Another topic that should be of vital concern to the LRP Work Program is climate resiliency. While we appreciate Task S1.2 *Significant Natural Resource (SNR) regulations assessment – implementation* that reflects County staff's response to community concerns to preserve limited natural resources, it overlooks the forest for the trees. Washington County has not facilitated enough candid conversation,

much less coordinated plans and action, devoted to climate change, a fundamental threat to present and future generations. Local efforts must provide the groundswell of support that shifts the tide of state and federal action in a more sustainable direction, and the LRP can and should play a significant role in elevating the issue and leading efforts to effect positive change by working more closely across departments including Health and Human Services and the County's Sustainability Team. As an aside, while the County's Sustainability Plan includes many laudable goals and actions, the 2009 resolution upon which it is founded makes no mention of climate change which, even at that time, represents a stark omission of a globally accepted fact and the underlying premise of any action taken in response. The REC appeals to the County to redouble its efforts on this vital issue, drawing from the wisdom of Native American traditions that consider the impacts of their plans seven generations into the future.

Lastly, The REC encourages greater outreach to and engagement of communities of color and immigrant groups in every aspect and throughout the entire process of the LRP Work Program. As an example, the Coalition of Communities of Color and VAN recently co-chaired a series of workshops hosted by Metro to develop recommendations for building the capacity of communities of color so that they could, in fact, meaningfully participate in Metro plans and programs. As part of Washington County's broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative, and in praise of the Board of Commissioners recent passage of the County's Equity Resolution, The REC urges Planning and Development Services to do its part from this day forward to promote similar capacity building efforts and increased civic engagement, to lead with race, and to help reverse the effects of ongoing disenfranchisement of people of color.

Again, we are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2020-21 Long Range Planning Work Program, and we look forward to working with your staff and the Board of Commissioners to improve the lives of people of color, and by virtue of our interdependence, the lives of all residents in Washington County.

Sincerely,



Marcus C. Mundy, Executive Director



Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director



Bridget Cooke, Executive Director



Nathan Teske, Executive Director



Chi Nguyen, Executive Director



Cc: Sia Lindstrom
Ruth Osuna