

## **Attachment B. STAFF REPORT FOR COMMITTEE ON RACIAL EQUITY PROPOSED SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS AND SITES POLICY**

### SUMMARY OF PROCESS TO APPLY METRO'S RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK TO INFORM DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY UPDATE

**Purpose:** This document provides background information about the process undertaken by staff to apply Metro's racial equity framework and engage stakeholders to inform development of the policy update. Some of the actions taken during the policy update process were critical in advancing Goals A, B, D and E of the SPAREDI.

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### **APPLYING METRO'S RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK**

To apply a racial equity framework to the policy update, Metro:

1. Convened an internal racial equity team,
2. Identified who tends to benefit and be burdened by the process of selecting a site, construction and operation of Metro facilities,
3. Reviewed data sets from multiple sources from the Regional Barometer and other sources to evaluate community conditions related to racial equity and impacts from construction projects,
4. Conducted stakeholder power analysis to determine who has influence to inform the policy decision as well as who is most impacted,
5. Reviewed and incorporated past previous input from community members related to Metro facilities, and
6. Engaged COBID-certified design and construction firms to get feedback on the proposed policy.

Applying this framework led Metro to:

1. Identify racial equity outcomes the policy will strive to achieve
2. Include policy requirements to achieve racial equity outcomes
3. Develop implementation strategies to reflect and address the needs of COBID firms

### **RACIAL EQUITY TEAM**

Metro formed a Racial Equity Team (RET) of staff from across Metro with experience in racial equity analysis, accessibility, serving the public, and the operation and maintenance of Metro facilities, as well as staff with lived experience.

### *Identifying benefits and burdens*

RET members were asked to identify who tends to benefit or be burdened by the planning, design, construction, and maintenance and operation of Metro facilities. Those who tend to benefit from construction, renovation, and operation of new and existing Metro buildings include residents who already know about and use Metro services, people who can access reliable transportation, established design, engineering and construction firms who are often awarded contracts over smaller BIPOC-owned firms, and households near public transit and public amenities who can more easily access services. People with higher incomes, formal education and who speak English are more readily involved in the planning of new public facilities and benefit from having a more direct path to influence the decision-making process.

Those who tend to be burdened include people living nearby who can be impacted by traffic, noise, pollution, and communities and neighborhoods disrupted or displaced by the siting and construction of new facilities. People with unreliable transportation or who have difficulty accessing public transit tend to lack access to Metro facilities and services. Non-English-speaking people are often overlooked or ignored in building wayfinding and signage. People with mobility and accessibility issues often lack physical access to public facilities.

The people most impacted by new facilities are often those least represented in public engagement and decision-making processes. BIPOC communities suffer a disproportionate share of diesel particulate pollution and environmental toxins from the construction and operation of existing facilities. Those same communities often experience higher rates of dangerous urban heat island effect. BIPOC-owned businesses often get edged out by larger firms during contracting. Frontline staff who maintain buildings and interact with community members using buildings are often not involved in the planning, design, or decision making.

### *Evaluating community data*

The RET examined data sets from the [Metro Regional Barometer](#) and other sources to help evaluate community conditions related to racial equity and the possible impacts from Metro projects past, present, and future. Data evaluation showed that a higher percentage of low income, people of color, and English-limited language residents live in equity focus areas<sup>1</sup> with corresponding inequities related to environmental hazards, transportation, access to greenspace, language barriers, socioeconomic conditions, accessibility, urban heat island effect, and toxic chemicals and health. These same equity focus areas within the Portland metropolitan region also correlate with areas of historic disinvestment, redlining, and are largely located along or near transportation corridors where development by public agencies has resulted in displacement.

There is a lack of diversity in the construction trades in greater Portland – especially across higher skilled construction occupations. BIPOC and women face multiple barriers in

accessing and sustaining construction careers. The inconsistent nature of construction work, lack of career ladders at construction firms, and insufficient funding and resources for education, job training and support services are among the factors that limit career employment.

### *Stakeholder power analysis*

Metro conducted a stakeholder power analysis with some members of the Racial Equity Team to determine who has influence to inform policy decisions related to siting, design, construction and operation of Metro facilities as well as who is most impacted. Stakeholder analysis helped inform policy development engagement efforts.

## **INCORPORATING PAST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK RELATED TO METRO FACILITIES**

As part of applying a racial equity framework to the policy development, Metro examined previous feedback from community members received in recent years related to the planning and siting, operation and use of existing and prospective Metro facilities, including:

1. Metro South Transfer Station - Public Involvement Summary Report and Future South Community Lens document
2. Metro's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Initiative Community Engagement Report and ADA Compliance Initiative Transition Plan for Parks and Nature
3. Oregon Zoo Community Accessibility Workshop

Metro did a crosswalk of the feedback received through these engagement efforts with the proposed policy to determine how prior community input is reflected and addressed in the policy. Please see Appendix A of the proposed policy for a summary of this crosswalk.

## **ENGAGEMENT OF COBID-CERTIFIED FIRMS**

As part of this policy update, Metro worked with a consultant (EnviroIssues) to engage COBID-certified construction and design firms about the policy update process. Metro recruited focus group participation from community-based organizations who support COBID firms including the Professional Business Development Group (PBDG), National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC), Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME), and LatinoBuilt. Metro hosted two paid, virtual focus groups with a total of ten COBID firms to:

- Get feedback on the potential benefits or challenges that the new policy requirements could create for them, from competing for projects through the delivery of services once a contract is awarded.
- Use feedback to identify ways that Metro could support COBID firms in working with Metro and meeting the policy requirements.

### *Key takeaways from focus groups*

- Participants support Metro's commitment to sustainability with the new standards.
- Tracking certifications and specific requirements across different agencies is an ongoing challenge. Participants asked Metro to coordinate with other agencies to use similar standards when possible.
- The cost and process of learning about and obtaining new accreditations can be prohibitive and exclusionary for smaller firms with limited capital, staff, and other resources.
- Firms have a wide range of experience with third-party certifications. LEED was the most familiar certification. Only a couple participants recognized CORE, Sustainable SITES, and Salmon Safe.
- The policy should have flexibility built into it to consider which requirements make sense for individual projects.
- Participants requested more information about the certifications and policy requirements and expressed interest in a variety of offerings including online and in-person trainings, informational sessions, site visits, and charrettes.
- Participants cited a need for Metro to help facilitate connections between COBID firms, subject matter experts, and suppliers so they can form competitive teams that include the expertise required by the updated policy.

### *Incorporating COBID firm engagement feedback*

To address COBID focus group feedback and the ability for COBID firms to successfully compete for Metro projects, the policy implementation plan includes the following:

- Clarification within policy materials how projects can apply for an exemption from Core certification if not feasible for the project. If the exemption is approved, a project can pursue an alternative path of LEED certification with baseline LEED credits required.
- Metro to provide as much advance notice as possible regarding Metro's upcoming request for proposals (RFPs) and requirements.

- Metro procurement will ensure solicitations include an estimated project schedule and cost, so contractors can assess and better meet expectations in the request for proposal.
- Metro procurement will include detailed requirements and scoring metrics in project RFPs and specifications.
- Metro will reimburse the cost for firms to earn JUST certification within project budgets to ease certification burdens.
- A policy toolkit with a comprehensive and accessible library of resources on policy requirements, resources, and implementation tools.
- Trainings and informational sessions on policy requirements.
- Outreach to COBID firms to connect them with professionals and firms following best practice in order to grow capacity within the industry.