



CITY OF OPPORTUNITY

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LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

Recently there have been a number of questions raised about the efforts of the Oregon Economic Development Foundation to acquire options on property in eastern Oregon. The Oregon Economic Development Foundation is the economic development arm of the City of Oregon. It is funded in partnership with our private sector businesses and the City.

It is the job of the Foundation, and ultimately the City, to look forward for opportunities to help ensure that there are jobs for our residents and a tax base to support quality of life, schools, and good services for the community. Oregon is fortunate to have a number of strong major employers that are the primary economic drivers for our city. Unfortunately, there is never a guarantee that a large employer can remain stable or even in operation. With this in mind we continue to explore ways to diversify our economy and our employment base.

As a City, we are also aware of the challenges that other communities have faced when a major employer closed. When Flint, Michigan and Lordstown, Ohio lost their manufacturing facilities, the cities and residents faced years of severe economic disruption, higher unemployment, loss in school funding, and community decline. It is our job to search out opportunities to protect our future to the extent possible.

For that purpose we are primarily working to market and develop land in our northwest industrial area. But there is simply not enough land in that area for larger projects along the lines of the recent First Solar expansion, Amazon warehouse, or Peloton Manufacturing announcement. Many projects are now looking for larger sites of over 250 acres to meet their needs.

Recently, and over the next few years there will be a number of projects of similar scope and scale looking for locations in the Midwest. It is projects along those lines that Oregon is seeking to attract. Oregon is a desirable location for such developments because we have the water, sewer, natural gas, electricity, port, rail, and proximity to workforce to compete.



We also want to emphasize the type of development we are seeking. We are not looking to host smokestacks or anything that remotely resembles a power plant, chemical plant, or refinery in eastern Oregon. It simply doesn't belong there. We are working to attract assembly buildings such as the Peloton or First Solar projects that want large acreage with lots of well-paid employees. Oregon specifically declined to respond to development proposals for that area that we believed were not attractive or desirable developments for our future.

No land has been purchased and no specific projects are in development. Neither the Foundation nor the City can or would force anyone to sell their land for future development. Before we can even have a discussion about future possibilities though we wanted to determine if some property owners were even interested in exploring a future sale by considering an option for their property in order to assemble a possible site. Such site assembly is done with an option agreement, followed up with a purchase only if a project moves forward after an appropriate process.

Ultimately any decision on a future development will require a multiple public hearing process with opportunity for community comment and input before decisions are made.

We know many have expressed concern about property values when such projects are considered. The data from other communities tells us that the vast majority of properties in a community increase in value when major projects are attracted. We also recognized that no project or development is attractive to everyone, but we have an obligation to explore approaches to development, then to make decisions together as a community.