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Dear Heartland 2050 Equity & Engagement Committee (EEC):

The draft Heartland 2050 regional plan has a lot to offer in terms of noble goals and honorable aspirations. And, many areas of the plan are addressed in substantial depth. However, there are also some glaring deficiencies in addressing essential core values as well as important desired outcomes for the EEC. We want to take this opportunity to provide our critical feedback to this draft plan while there is still a chance to affect the final product. Our critique addresses the core value of inclusion and the importance of law in land use planning systems development. We also focus on the desired strategic outcomes of increased affordable housing, reduced urban sprawl, and increased sustainability/environmental conservation.

## Inclusion

Inclusiveness is listed as a guiding principle of Heartland 2050. That principle should be a central focus of every strategy listed in the plan. A land use planning, implementation and evaluation process that is inclusive, and actively incorporates public engagement processes that honor our region's widely diverse voices (especially the frequently excluded voices of our most vulnerable, least powerful segments of the population) has the best chance to build thriving, vibrant, connected, safe, just and livable communities.

- To ensure inclusive community engagement and collaboration, traditional system stakeholders must be willing to invest in expanding the capacity of necessary contributors who will otherwise be left out.<sup>i</sup>
- A commitment to closing opportunity gaps should be a value incorporated in multiple sections of the plan.<sup>ii</sup>
- The regional land use planning system, all those engaged in the land use planning process, as well as those implementing land use strategies, must recognize the continuing influences of racism and the need to explicitly reject discrimination and discriminatory policies and practices.

## Land Use Planning System, Strategic Plan and Laws

A regional plan without the force of law behind it risks creating the opportunity for critical stakeholders to keep on doing the same old thing, while wearing a new cloak of credibility. In addition to laws, effective land

use planning requires a system<sup>iii</sup> in place, equipped to coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive land use strategic plan. The primary purposes of the system should be to develop a detailed comprehensive regional plan and coordinate the separate but connected planning activities of local governments, state and federal agencies. Options to ensure the above include:

- Establishment of a regional land conservation and development commission.<sup>iv</sup>
- Establishment of land use authorities at state and city levels to (1) coordinate land use systems, (2) ensure the proper implementation of related laws, policies and practices, (3) advocate for the institution and amendment of new laws, policies and practices, as well as (4) develop and implement the necessary approval and amendment processes.<sup>v, vi, vii, viii</sup>
- Clearly defined goals and establishment of specific, measurable short-, medium- and long-term desired outcomes in regional comprehensive land use strategic plan.<sup>ix</sup> The land use authorities mentioned above must develop their own land use strategic plans that, together, will support the success of the comprehensive regional plan.
- All levels of comprehensive planning must explicitly include strong collaborative mechanisms across state and local authorities to insure firm public steering.<sup>x, xi, xii</sup>
- Land use strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation must be integrated across the local, regional, state and interstate levels.<sup>xiii, xiv</sup>
- Every level of the system and its processes, as well as the outcomes of land use planning, must be transparent, and the system and those implementing land use strategies must be responsive and accountable.<sup>xv</sup>

### **Affordable Housing**

Ensuring plenty of affordable housing (which should be clearly defined as housing available at price ranges and rent levels that are commensurate with the financial capabilities of the region's households and allow for flexibility of housing location, type and density<sup>xvi, xvii</sup>) should be a priority. Various options to achieve this end include:

- Local zoning must take into account regional housing needs, so that all localities provide their "fair share" of affordable housing.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Create a mechanism to counter exclusionary zoning practices in the state (e.g., set a goal such that each municipality should have 10 percent of its year-round housing stock earmarked as affordable housing).<sup>xix</sup>
- Require that urban growth boundaries be established and updated periodically to manage urban growth and contain sprawl.<sup>xx, xxi</sup>

### **Urban Sprawl**

Stemming urban sprawl should be a priority. Various options to achieve this end include:

- Urban growth boundaries.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Concentrate new development and redevelopment in areas that have existing or planned infrastructure.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- Quality public transportation.<sup>xxiv, xxv</sup>
- Broad-based citizen participation in everything from local and regional planning to neighborhood associations.<sup>xxvi, xxvii</sup>

## Sustainability & Environmental Conservation

It should be a priority that the people living in the region have the capacity and opportunity to maintain and improve their quality of life without degrading the quantity and quality of existing natural, social and economic resources.<sup>xxviii</sup> Options for accomplishing this goal include:

- Ensure the public and community sector has a long term stake in land and development through the creation of community development trusts, where land is held in common ownership by local authorities or trusts.<sup>xxix xxx</sup>
- Ensure that effective public transportation, utilities and social infrastructure (schools, hospitals) are provided in all new developments.<sup>xxxi xxxii</sup>
- Ensure all future land use planning reduces pollution and consumption of resources and decreases reliance on fossil fuels and increases reliance on renewable energy.<sup>xxxiii xxxiv</sup>
- Develop a strong water resource policy to ensure that discretionary development does not significantly impact the quantity or quality of water resources within watersheds, groundwater recharge areas or groundwater basins.<sup>xxxv</sup>
- Prohibit discretionary development that would have a significant impact on important habitats (e.g., wetlands).<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Sincerely,



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<sup>i</sup> Aspen Institute

<sup>ii</sup> Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.

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