



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EAST PORTLAND PILOT PLAN

JUNE 2015

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2014, conversations emerged among the Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF) and Black leaders to develop a People's Plan that would articulate a vision for Black Portland and help frame the policy agenda for ongoing advocacy. In January 2015, PAALF began a collaboration with Portland State University (PSU) graduate students in urban and regional planning. PAALF expressed interest in developing a pilot project focused on Africans and African Americans in East Portland who had been historically displaced by gentrification, while the graduate students were seeking a capstone planning project. None of the students identified as Black, however they championed PAALF's project proposal, and thus was born the East Portland Pilot Plan (EPPP).

## WHY A PILOT PLAN?

Generally, a pilot study is a small scale preliminary or exploratory study [1]. In this case, the East Portland Pilot Plan was developed to gather preliminary data and determine a strategic roadmap to support ongoing community engagement and planning efforts of the PAALF People's Plan.

## PILOT AREA BOUNDARIES

The East Portland pilot area was determined using three criteria: (1) places demonstrating an increasing Black population; (2) places vulnerable to gentrification; and (3) places with existing plans for future public investment. Based on these criteria, the pilot area was defined by the following boundaries:

SE Burnside and SE Stark Streets to the north,  
SE Powell Street and the Springwater Corridor Trail to the south,  
SE 122nd to the west, and  
SE 162nd to the east.

[1] van Teijlingen, E., & Hundley, V. (2002). The importance of pilot studies. *Nursing Standard*, 16(40), 33-36.

## OVERVIEW OF PAALF PEOPLE'S PLAN: EAST PORTLAND PILOT PLAN

Recognizing the traumatic experience of being forced to move and losing community, this plan reflects the hopes of community members who seek to rebuild their lives in a new place. The East Portland Pilot Plan applies the urban planning practice of placemaking as a transformative intervention for addressing challenges and stabilizing the Black community in East Portland. This plan also emerges at a critical time, as existing city plans for East Portland indicate significant future public investment and development.

### EAST PORTLAND PILOT PLAN GOALS

- 1** Strengthen networks among Africans and African Americans in East Portland, while enabling capacity building;
- 2** Elevate the profile of issues unique to Africans and African Americans within East Portland, and within the broader African and African American community in Portland; and
- 3** Provide a strategic roadmap for placemaking in East Portland that prioritizes African and African American issues.

### PLACEMAKING FOR RACIAL AND SPATIAL JUSTICE

For many, gentrification is deeply embedded in personal history, while for others it is an ongoing, everyday experience. This plan recognizes not only the displacement of people and housing associated with gentrification, but the cultural displacement as well. People in post-displacement communities experience loss of culture, livelihood, household and social fabric that are damaging to their well-being. This type of psychological trauma is referred to as root shock, or the sense of uprootedness that people experience from being displaced [2].

Placemaking can be a powerful intervention to address root shock experienced by the African and African American community in East Portland. While placemaking has the potential to be a driver of gentrification and displacement, it can also be understood in a participatory sense where community building, cultural and artistic expression and place-based community assets are the focus. When approached this way and through a process centered on historically marginalized communities, placemaking has immense potential to enable the (re)rooting of communities in a post-displacement context. By explicitly advocating for Black issues and priorities in East Portland, it then becomes clear how the city can help manifest racial and spatial justice through leveraging existing plans.

Seven principles of placemaking were applied in the East Portland Pilot Plan, which include:

1. Start with community assets and emphasize diversity;
2. Leverage place-based potential, skills, and culture. The community is the expert;
3. Make a place not a design;
4. Building a vision is just as important as building a place;
5. Integrate storytelling with placemaking;
6. Involve partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors; and
7. Start with small gains, but think long term.

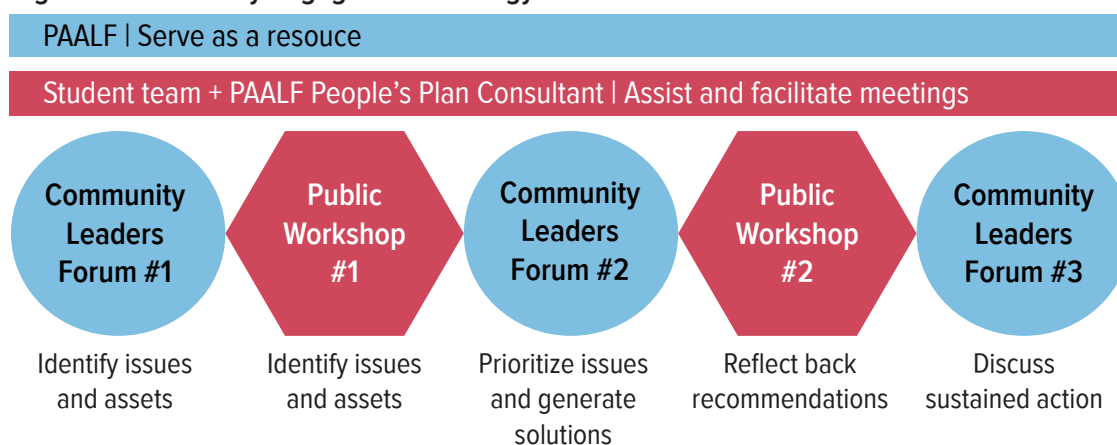
These principles were applied in order to guide the planning process in East Portland.

[2] Fullilove, M. (2009). Root shock: How tearing up city neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it. One World/Ballantine.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The goal of the 5-month planning process was to collaborate with a small group of community leaders in identifying issues and solutions to challenges faced by the African and African American community in East Portland. Figure 1 provides a graphic overview of the community engagement process.

**Figure 1: Community Engagement Strategy**



Given that none of the members of the student team could identify with the experience of being Black in Portland, the research method known as phenomenology was used to determine findings and recommendations. This method because it corrects for individual and cultural differences in perspective and meaning. Phenomenology is not solely concerned with what we experience, feel or think, but *how* we experience it and how subjective experiences are driving forces in the human experience.

Each team member spent time in self reflection, honestly taking account of his/her previous experiences and any preconceived notions they carried with them regarding race and equity, specifically in reference to the Black community in Portland. This practice was meant to protect against misinterpreting input shared by African and African American community members.

The student team leveraged place-based potential, skills and culture by recognizing the community as the expert during forums and workshops. During community leaders forums, public workshops, interviews and a focus group with the Black Student Union at David Douglas High School, the student team postured themselves to learn from the community by listening and integrating storytelling with placemaking. In these settings, the student team intentionally limited facilitation to allow space for community members to engage in authentic dialogue with one another and to share their personal experiences and stories.



### KEY FINDINGS

#### ROOT SHOCK

The primary manifestation of root shock expressed among East Portland participants comes from the disorganization of what was once a cohesive community. Community members expressed loneliness, isolation and concern that their needs could more easily be ignored because of the loss of organization. Additionally, as gentrification in North and Northeast (N/NE) Portland dismantled social fabric, community institutions have yet to follow displaced residents to East Portland. As a result, many of them continue to travel back and forth to access the familiar stores, services and cultural establishments that still survive. The fact that N/NE Portland remains an important destination and point of reference for participants suggests that East Portland does not nurture the needs of the Black community. Finally, community members lamented the dismantling of African and African American N/NE Portland because of the cultural and social significance of the place itself. Without the local examples of successful Black homeownership, businesses and neighborhoods, participants wondered how they could inspire future generations in East Portland. These findings suggest that community members are seeking a stronger sense of place, a stronger sense of community, and a way to better meet their basic needs in East Portland.

#### DRIVING FORCES AND THE BLACK EAST PORTLAND EXPERIENCE

**Organizational Capacity:** Regarding the lack of any sense of Black community within East Portland, participants demonstrated confidence in their capability to address this challenge. Many anticipated how difficult the task would be, however they exchanged various ideas and strategies for bringing people together. Some of these included bringing food to people's doors, posting flyers and organizing events to inform residents about existing resources and places for gathering and supporting causes important to the Black community in East Portland.

**Policy and Planning Forces:** The presence of Policy and Planning Forces as a driving force was often inferred by the student team because so many of the problems or aspirations discussed by East Portland participants could be addressed through better policy. Many issues linked to policy and planning forces were about transit access. Another topic entirely was the general land use patterns found in East Portland. Participants identified the spread out nature of East Portland as a hindrance to their life because it is difficult and unpleasant to walk. Additionally, they expressed frustration with apartments concentrated along major streets. This, some stated, creates a clear delineation between upper middle class homeowners and economically challenged apartment dwellers.

**Discrimination and Racism:** These forces came up explicitly related to specific topics. For example, the topic of TriMet's implementation of the efare system made many participants feel as though the transit agency was going to disadvantage the African and African American population by making cash fares less feasible. This made participants feel as though TriMet did not care about the impacts on the community. Additional issues which brought up concerns of systemic or interpersonal racism included the treatment of African immigrants with suspicion. Their experiences suggested that they were treated as other by White Portlanders and made to feel unequal, or not welcome.

**Market Forces:** Like Planning and Policy Forces, market forces were inferred by the student team. Market forces were found to be linked to transit issues, as well as employment and housing opportunity. The desire for a north-south bus was linked to market forces because discussion with participants revealed that there is a high demand for this service. Additionally, a north-south line would improve access to good paying jobs, a connection which would alter the nature of East Portland economics. The other issue most associated with market forces was the topic of displacement, which participants linked to the rising rents that drove some of them from their homes. In this case, the market was not properly regulated to prevent the devastation of a community.

**Historical Forces:** East Portland participants worried that without the example of Black society and all of the history and struggle it took to establish N/NE Portland, it would be hard for future generations to feel as though they could have a stake in Portland. Historical forces were also associated with the experience of root shock and the trauma associated with generations of displacement.



*East Portland Pilot Plan Public Workshop #1, Rosewood Initiative*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PLANNING THEME AREAS

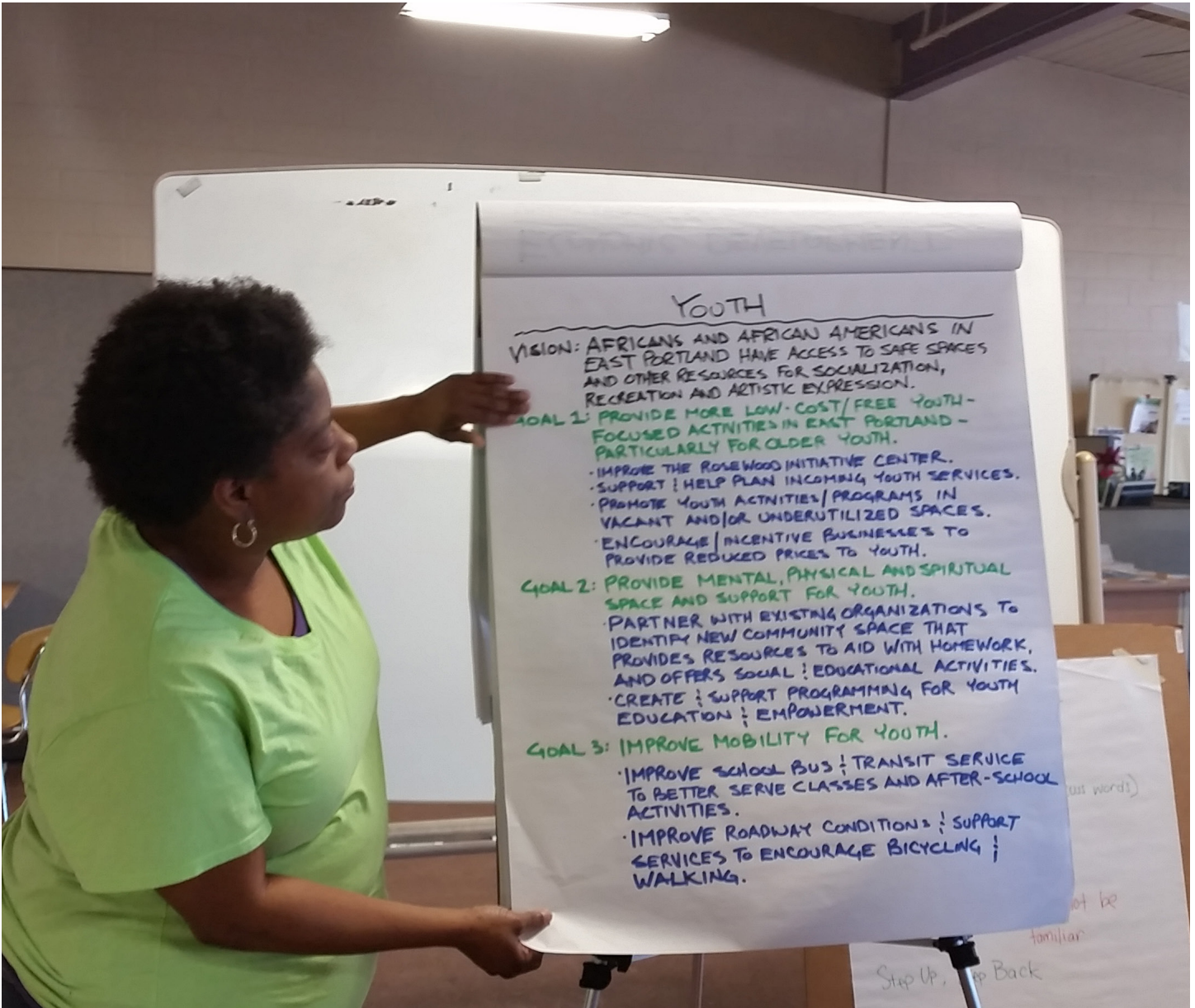
**Sense of Place:** A common sentiment from project participants was that the city has forgotten about Africans and African Americans in East Portland. Despite recent efforts by the public sector to improve economic health and livability in the area, project participants pointed to certain needs that remain unaddressed. For example, there are relatively few gathering places in East Portland, as well as limited celebration of an East Portland identity. While the contributions of Africans and African Americans are well known and memorialized in the historic neighborhoods of N/NE Portland, there is little acknowledgement of the contributions of this community in East Portland. Because of these factors, opportunities to connect with one another and (re)build community in the area are limited. A lack of gathering places, community identity, and celebration may act as barriers to developing a positive relationship with place.

**Access and Mobility:** Social infrastructure like churches, walkable shopping areas and community centers that serve African and African American residents are lacking in East Portland. Because of this, many of the participants frequently travel to N/NE neighborhoods in order to access familiar amenities and services, as well as to socialize and attend community events. The public places where people would likely encounter one another, such as MAX stops, were generally associated with filth and crime. Additional research also pointed to longer commutes to work experienced by many people living in East Portland. Finally, the pilot area was observed by participants and the student team to have few good sidewalks and infrequent transit service, making travel by car a necessity and reducing the likelihood that Africans and African Americans will cross paths in East Portland.

**Economic Development:** East Portland is challenged by higher rates of unemployment and poverty. There are fewer job opportunities located in East Portland, as well as lower rates of homeownership. Additionally, project participants expressed concerns about improving opportunities for developing the skills needed to work, as well as expanding support for emerging entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses in East Portland.

**Youth:** Youth issues were an important consideration for East Portland participants. While a majority of them were adults, many shared concerns about providing enough support and resources for youth. Older members of the group observed that more youth today are growing up in broken homes and fragmented communities where fewer community members are able to look out for each other. A lack of enriching activities and programming for youth between the ages of 13 and 21 was a prominent issue among the adults, particularly those who identified as parents. Students participating in a high school focus group also echoed these concerns.





East Portland Pilot Plan Public Workshop #2, Rosewood Initiative

# STRATEGIC ROADMAP

## **A STRATEGIC ROADMAP TO A THRIVING AND VIBRANT BLACK COMMUNITY IN EAST PORTLAND**

The East Portland Pilot Plan presents a series of recommendations to support the work of the Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF), its partners, and residents in East Portland. These recommendations strive to achieve the overarching goal of helping the Black community in East Portland to (re)connect with one another, build capacity, and strive toward community self-determination. Some recommendations were developed in direct response to the stories shared by participants, while others were developed by the team to align community needs with anticipated development in East Portland. Ultimately, the student team offers these as potential avenues for community healing, and manifesting racial and spatial justice in our city.





# SENSE OF PLACE

**VISION: EAST PORTLAND IS A PLACE WHERE AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS LIVE IN A THRIVING, VISIBLE, VIBRANT AND IDENTIFIABLE BLACK COMMUNITY.**

**Goal SP1: Address issues of root shock experienced by Africans and African Americans who formerly lived in North or Northeast Portland.**

SP1.1 Partner with local advocacy groups like the Urban League of Portland, IRCO/Africa House and African Youth and Community Organization to facilitate neighborhood networking through forums discussing challenges of Africans and African Americans in East Portland.

SP 1.2 Partner with the American Institute of Architects' Urban Design Panel, City of Portland, Design+Culture Lab and Portland State University to identify new design ideas for streets and buildings in East Portland that recreate desirable neighborhood gathering spaces from North and Northeast Portland.

**Goal SP2: Raise the visibility of Africans and African Americans in East Portland.**

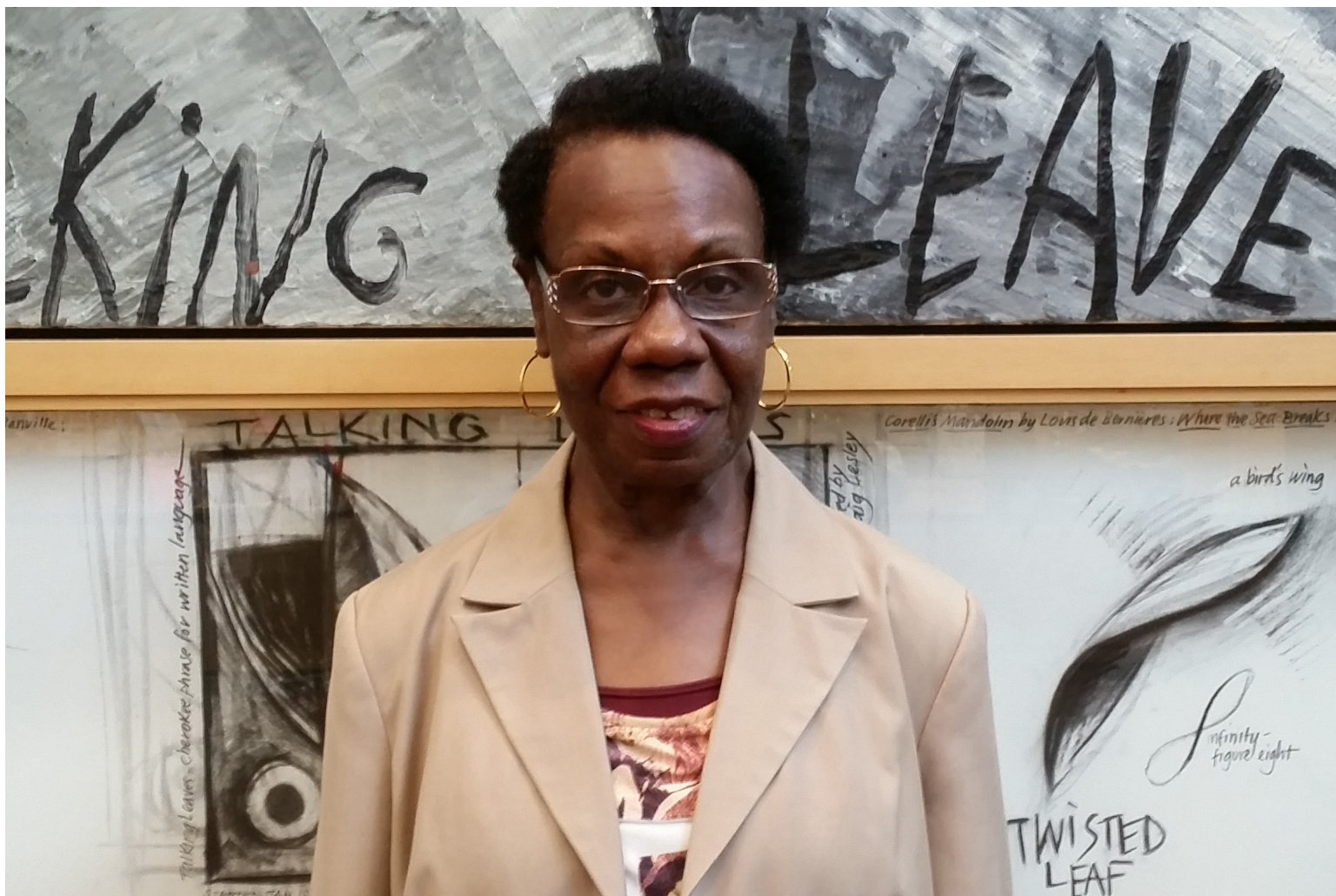
SP 2.1 Partner with EPAP, Urban League of Portland and organizers of local festivals like Good in the Neighborhood to host African and African American-specific cultural events, arts exhibits and festivals.

SP2.2 Partner with the City of Portland and Portland's elected officials to identify opportunities of renaming key streets, parks and other public amenities in East Portland to people and places relevant to Africans and African Americans.

SP2.3 Partner with PDC, the Regional Arts & Culture Council and the Pacific Northwest College of Art to implement a mural program focused on visually improving commercial building walls in major corridors utilizing local Black artists.

SP2.4 Partner with TriMet, the Regional Arts & Culture Council and the Pacific Northwest College of Art to implement an art program that pairs aspiring artists with professional artists from East Portland's African and African American community to create temporary interactive exhibits at East Portland MAX stations and high-use bus stops.





### **Goal SP3: Promote African and African American-oriented places and districts.**

SP3.1 Partner with East Portland neighborhood and business associations, EPAP, Venture Portland and elected officials on developing a workshop aimed at generating ideas for a corridor or district of Black-owned and oriented businesses in East Portland.

SP3.2 Partner with EPAP, the Urban League of Portland, IRCO/Africa House, the City of Portland to assess the feasibility of an African and African American-specific community center in East Portland.

### **Goal SP4: Increase Black community organizational capacity in East Portland.**

SP4.1 Develop a PAALF East Portland Committee and/or partner with the Urban League of Portland, IRCO/Africa House and the City of Portland to create an advisory group to regularly inform PAALF on issues affecting Africans and African Americans in East Portland.



# ACCESS AND MOBILITY

**VISION:** EAST PORTLAND IS A PLACE WHERE AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE SAFE, EFFICIENT AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO JOBS, SHOPPING, AND NEEDED SERVICES THROUGH A VARIETY OF MODES, INCLUDING DRIVING, TRANSIT, WALKING AND BICYCLING.

## **Goal AM1: Increase safety, mobility and accessibility.**

AM1.1 Partner with EPAP, City of Portland, TriMet, Oregon state legislators representing East Portland, to fund new and improved sidewalks, lighting and crosswalks near bus stops and MAX stations in East Portland.

AM1.2 Partner with OPAL and EPAP to advocate for new routes, expanded routes and improved frequencies of existing routes in East Portland whenever TriMet reassesses the area's transit service needs.

AM1.3 Partner with the Portland Police Bureau and TriMet to assess the need for classical music played at high-crime, East Portland MAX stations, and if determined to be a crime deterrent, provide mechanisms that allow people to temporarily turn the volume down or off when needing to place a 911 call.

## **Goal AM2: Eliminate racial, socioeconomic and spatial inequities in transportation planning decisions.**

AM2.1 Partner with OPAL and EPAP to ensure that TriMet and the City of Portland maintain and increase their awareness of East Portland-specific mobility needs and inequities at transportation-related forums.

AM2.2 Partner with OPAL and EPAP to advocate that TriMet perform an assessment of the job commute and general transit needs of Africans and African Americans in East Portland.

AM2.3 Partner with OPAL and EPAP to advocate that TriMet ensures that future transit payment systems can be used by low income earners, specifically people without credit cards or mobile devices.



**Goal AM3: Improve transit facilities to better ensure comfort and cultural-appropriateness.**

AM3.1 Partner with OPAL and EPAP to ensure that TriMet regularly and continually assesses common languages spoken in East Portland and maintains multilingual transit service information on-board vehicles and at bus stops and MAX stations.

AM3.2 Partner with the Portland Police Bureau, TriMet and the City of Portland to increase the number of African and African American transit officers in East Portland.

AM3.3. Partner with TriMet and the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) to identify opportunities to integrate African and African American history and culture into educational boards and public art at existing bus stops and MAX stations in East Portland.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**VISION: AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS POSSESS THE NEEDED SKILLS TO EFFECTIVELY COMPETE FOR JOBS, ENJOY REGION-WIDE ACCESS TO FAMILY WAGE JOBS AND CONTRIBUTE TO THRIVING BUSINESS DISTRICTS IN EAST PORTLAND.**

**Goal ED1: Cultivate a dramatic increase of African and African American-owned businesses in East Portland.**

ED1.1 Partner with leaders in the Black business community, as well as IRCO, PDC, and Mercy Corps Northwest to conduct a study to better support Black-owned businesses in East Portland.

**Goal ED2: Increase community wealth and social capital of Black people in East Portland.**

ED2.1 Partner with the Albina Community Bank to identify ways to establish a Black-owned community bank in East Portland.

ED2.2 Increase affordable homeownership opportunities for Africans and African Americans in East Portland by partnering with organizations like the African American Alliance for Homeownership, Portland Housing Bureau, Portland Housing Center, and Proud Ground.

ED2.3 Partner with the Black United Fund of Oregon, Portland Community College and Mount Hood Community College to identify ways to reduce barriers to college education for African and African American students in East Portland.

**Goal ED3: Ensure long-term sustainable economic development in East Portland.**

ED3.1 Collaborate with organizations like IRCO, OPAL, APANO and others in East Portland to negotiate an agreement with the City of Portland to ensure that at least 30% of jobs through development-related activities in the area to go locals from historically marginalized communities.





**Goal ED4: Increase access to family wage jobs.**

ED4.1 Partner with the Portland Community College Swan Island Trades Center and to increase access to skill sets that are in high demand by establishing a workforce development center in East Portland.

ED4.2 Merge job training with neighborhood improvement activities by partnering with PDC and local churches.

ED4.3 Advocate for increasing the minimum wage by joining the 15 Now Portland coalition to support the eradication of poverty wages in the state.

# YOUTH

**VISION: AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH IN EAST PORTLAND HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE SPACES AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR SOCIALIZATION, RECREATION AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION.**

**Goal Y1: Provide more low-cost/free youth focused activities in East Portland, particularly for youth between the ages of 13 and 21.**

Y1.1 Partner with David Douglas High School Black Student Union (BSU), Boys and Girls Club of Portland and Friends of Children to support and help plan incoming youth services.

Y1.2 Partner with the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS), Groundwork Portland and BSU to promote youth activities and programs in underutilized and/or vacant spaces.

Y1.3 Partner with BPS and BSU to develop a social media marketing campaign to encourage youth-friendly businesses in East Portland to provide reduced prices to youth.

**Goal Y2: Provide mental, physical and spiritual spaces and support services for Black youth in East Portland.**

Y2.1 Partner with SEI to increase and support programming for Black youth education and empowerment in East Portland.





**Goal Y3: Improve mobility for youth in East Portland.**

Y3.1 Partner with David Douglas School District, BSU and Multnomah Youth Commission to improve school bus and transit-services to better serve classes and after-school activities.

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