

Date: July 7, 2022

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Richard Whitman, Director
Lydia Emer, Land Quality Division Administrator

Subject: Item H: Built Environment Strategic Plan (Informational)
July 21-22, 2022, EQC meeting

Why this is important The built environment is most commonly understood as the physical spaces we occupy, but is also the physical and social infrastructures related to those spaces. The physical infrastructure supports physical spaces and our daily lives – roads, paths, transit. The social infrastructure and systems inform and drive the material manifestation, as well as the outcomes and well-being of people, communities, the environment and ecosystems.

DEQ's inaugural [Built Environment Strategic Plan](#) (BESP) was developed in 2021 by a 14-person steering committee of both DEQ and non-DEQ representatives with various expertise and lived experience in built environment, equity, and community engagement. The process to co-create the plan, and the plan itself, marks an expansion and deepening of the Materials Management Program's approach to strategic planning. DEQ published the final plan in February 2022.

Since publication, DEQ has used the BESP to guide development of the 2022 work plan for Materials Management's Built Environment program and to inform how projects are scoped, including who is engaged and how the work should be approached. The BESP has been a valuable framework in intentionally centering equity, environmental justice, racial justice, and well-being in the program's projects and processes.

DEQ will provide commissioners with an overview of the BESP, the approach used to develop it, and some examples of the BESP in action through current projects identified in the 2022 work plan.

Background The built environment was identified as a priority for the Materials Management Program in the [2020 Framework for Action](#) because of the significant impact it has on the natural environment, ecosystems, people, plants, and animals.

Buildings account for 30 percent of Oregon’s [consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions](#) – and eight percent of these emissions are due to carbon emissions associated with construction materials. In addition, nearly one-third of Oregon’s waste stream is made up of construction and demolition waste. The built environment affects human health through exposure to toxics in materials, proximity to polluting industrial uses, indoor environmental quality, and potential vulnerability during natural disasters. In addition, the built environment has played, and continues to play, a role in the structural inequities that exacerbate the burdens of the climate and health crises, environmental justice, and economic opportunities for BIPOC, low-income, rural, and other frontline communities. Given the complexity and vast scale of the built environment, the breadth of impacts to be addressed, and the systemic injustices that lead to more burden for some people and communities, DEQ determined that a strategic plan was necessary to guide the work of the Built Environment Program.

Initial planning and outreach for the strategic planning process began in late 2020. Sun Joo Kim, of Diversity in Design, was hired to co-lead the development of the BEBP including co-design of the approach, co-facilitation of the process, and co-authoring the BEBP with DEQ. In spring 2021, steering committee members were identified. The steering committee included 14 people with a diversity of expertise and lived experience: Eight DEQ staff including representatives from Materials Management, Air Quality, Eastern Region, and Environmental Justice/Director’s Office; and six non-DEQ committee members brought expertise in the built environment, DEI, building codes, material design and manufacture, chemistry, community engagement, and design justice. All committee members not employed by the State were compensated for their participation.

In June and July 2021, steering committee members participated in six workshops which including building a collective understanding and exploration of issues relevant to the built environment and the co-creation of the BEBP. The workshops included grounding the committee in the scale of the built environment and the impacts and inequities present, understanding built

environment systems through collaborative mapping exercises, and development of guidance and priorities for the DEQ Built Environment Program. Through the fall of 2021, steering committee members reviewed the draft BESP and, in February 2022, DEQ published the BESP in both English and Spanish.

Since the plan's publication, the DEQ Built Environment Program has developed a 2022 work plan and begun work on the identified projects. The projects identified for 2022 are foundational work that builds from the strategic planning process, focusing on building relationships and continuing to bring more voices to the table. These projects include listening sessions across the state for diverse audiences, mapping Oregon's building materials resource flows and impacts, and establishing programs to fund the work of others including a transparency disclosure incentive and pilot program funding. The outcomes of the foundational work, including research and input from interested parties from around the state, will inform the work of the program in 2023 and beyond.

Key issues

Acknowledging systemic injustices including the displacement, forced labor, disenfranchisement, and violence which has led to, and maintains, the harms and inequities of the built environment, it was essential to center equity, environmental justice, racial justice, and well-being in the strategic planning process and in the work of the Built Environment Program moving forward. Centering these four criteria in the development of the strategic planning process, the planning workshops, and the guidance and priorities identified in the BESP has already made an impact in how we selected and are working on the projects that were prioritized for 2022.

Complex, sometimes rapidly emerging needs and priorities, both global and local, demand a flexible, nimble, and adaptive approach. The BESP needed to be an iterative, living document that can adapt to emerging issues which may not be readily seen in this moment, but will be revealed in the coming months and years. DEQ is able to be adaptable because the BESP is not a static list of projects or a set time frame, but instead provides guidance and priorities that direct the work of the program.

Addressing the issues of the built environment is larger and more complex than any one team, organization, agency, state, or country could take on alone. The interconnectedness of it all insists that we need to collaboratively work in

partnership together toward a more just future for all. Building relationships and trust is key to doing this work. DEQ began this in the scoping workshops, bringing together a diverse steering committee. DEQ's Built Environment Program continues to do this by prioritizing 2022 foundational projects that bring more voices, perspectives, expertise, and lived experiences to the table in order to guide the future work of the program, and standing up funding programs that will support the work others are already doing in support of the mission of the Built Environment Program and the [2050 Vision](#).

EQC involvement There is no EQC action associated with this informational presentation.

Supporting materials

1. Built Environment Strategic Plan:
<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/mm/production/Pages/Strategic-Plan.aspx>
2. Materials Management *2050 Vision and Framework for Action*:
<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/MManagementOR.pdf>

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