

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS | October 2008

Robert Liberty represents District 6, which includes portions of Northeast, Southeast and Southwest Portland.



Bail-outs, Melt-downs and Grow-ups

On a sunny morning near the end of September, I sat down to a ROSE Community Development Corporation benefit breakfast with a nice group of people from Washington Mutual, one of the sponsors and the nation's largest savings and loan. A few hours later, the assets of Washington Mutual declared bankruptcy and its assets seized by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. It has now been merged in JP Morgan Chase Bank.

As I write, the U.S. House of Representatives has just defeated the proposed \$700 billion investment by U.S. taxpayers in the mortgages now called "toxic waste," the Dow Jones has dropped 700 points and the British government has taken over one of that nation's banks.

How will these events – all tied to the financing of the nation's homes - affect the pattern of housing development in our region, an important element of Metro's work?

First, a declining economy and the direction of taxpayers' dollars to address the financial crisis is going to mean less revenue at the federal and state level to pay for investments in public improvements, roads, sewers, water supply and bridges.

If there is less money overall, I predict a higher priority will be given to fixing the infrastructure we already have instead of building new facilities. This, in turn, will increase the already growing trend for us to grow up around existing infrastructure instead of outward, onto farm and forestlands and natural areas, which requires new infrastructure. At a minimum, it will increase the level of discussion about how we choose between competing demands on the public's money.

Second, major investments by Congress of taxpayer dollars on the financial crisis, and declining income tax revenues in Oregon will turn the discussion about financing development and redevelopment inward. There will be fewer lobbying expeditions to Salem and Washington DC, and more discussions with taxpayers in our region about what, if anything, they are willing to support. Although we may regret the occasion for this discussion, it seems like a worthwhile one to have.

Third, the collapse of the housing bubble is revealing - and perhaps reinforcing - a shift in consumer preferences: there are bigger declines in home price and more mortgage defaults on the edge of the urban area than at the center (with the exception of central city condo development.) In fact, some neighborhoods near the center of the region have not (yet) experienced any decrease in home value. Tighter credit for home purchase may lead many homeowners to choose to remodel rather than move. The bottom line is that events suggest that the regional strategy of growing up, not out, is in sync with the market.

Perhaps all of these predictions will prove mistaken. But if nothing else, it has taken my mind off thoughts of more serious repercussions from the day's news.

– Robert Liberty



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Celebrating 25 years of Salmon Festival and Millions of years of Salmon in the Sandy River

Celebrating 25 years of Salmon Festival and six million years of salmon in the Sandy River, the annual Salmon Festival at Metro's Oxbow Regional Park celebrates the special connection between people and wild salmon and inspires us to value clean water and healthy watersheds.

The Salmon Festival provides activities and exhibits to help us better understand the challenges of managing the region's fish, wildlife and water resources while balancing the needs of a growing metropolitan region. The festival also features great entertainment, children's activities, horse-drawn wagon rides, a salmon bake, arts and crafts, environmental exhibits and a food court. Entertainment, exhibits, children's activities and food areas are all under cover.

New to the festival this year is the Sandy River Fall Chinook timeline, chronicling 400 million years of geologic activity and six million years of salmon in the Sandy River. The timeline provides visual representation of the story of the salmon and connects key events to sites in the park visitors can walk to.

Oxbow Regional Park is located in the Sandy River Gorge, 8 miles east of Gresham. Festival admission is \$8 per vehicle or \$12 per bus. Pets are not allowed. For more information, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/salmonfestival or call 503-797-1850.



Zoo welcomes baby elephant Samudra

Rose-Tu, a 14-year-old Asian elephant and first-time mother, gave birth to a 286-pound male calf at the Oregon Zoo on Aug 23. More than 17,000 people cast votes to help keepers name the baby elephant. The winner, with 35 percent of the votes is "Samudra," or Sam for short. Samudra is Hindi for "lord of the ocean." After zookeepers made some time for the Mother and baby to bond, zoo visitors have been able to see the healthy baby elephant trotting around the gallery, following his mother.

Rose-Tu, born August 31, 1994, was the most recent elephant born at the zoo. Rose-Tu is a popular elephant within the herd and with her keepers. She is always looking to tease her herd mates and shares a strong friendship with Chendra, who is nearly the same age. Rose-Tu is the second smallest elephant in the herd, weighing about 7,600 pounds. She conceived in late 2006.

The Oregon Zoo has a renowned breeding program for endangered Asian elephants. More than 25 elephants have been born at the zoo, beginning with Packy in 1962.

An endangered species, Asian elephants are represented by an estimated 38,000 to 51,000 individuals living in fragmented populations in the wild. Agriculture, deforestation and conflict with humans pose a constant threat to wild Asian elephants.

Public comment sought on 2010-13 Regional Flexible Fund Allocations

Metro Regional Center
Thursday, Oct. 30, 5 to 8 p.m.
Council Chamber
600 NE Grand Ave., Portland

Metro is hosting listening posts in partnership with the Oregon Department of Transportation. At the same time that Metro is seeking public input on the regional flexible fund allocations, ODOT is seeking public comment on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

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About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

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