



# MEMORANDUM

**To:** BEDAB

**From:** Katy Brooks, Economic Development Officer

**Date:** June 1, 2026

**Re:** Employment Lands Site Readiness Program

*The following is for BEDAB consideration for recommendations to the Bend City Council and Bend Urban Renewal Agency regarding employment land site readiness.*

## **Industrial Land Creates Living Wage Jobs**

Bend's economic resilience depends on a robust range of businesses, including those in the industrial sector. The availability of competitive, build-ready industrial land attracts employers that generate family-wage jobs that creates a more prosperous community.

- Jobs within industrial lands pay 20 – 70 percent more (US Bureau of Labor Statistics) than commercial and retail lands, increasing the number of AMI 80-150 incomes that allow for more individuals and families to live and work in Bend.
- These employers are often within the City's targeted sectors within the Economic Development Strategic Plan, including bio and health sciences, specialty and outdoor product development and advanced production.

## **Scarcity of Build-ready Industrial Land is a Wage-generation Constraint**

Industrial land is scarce in Bend and is restricting development of industries that will provide higher wage employment opportunities due to long timelines to site readiness of industrial land.

This contributes to:

- Increasing the impacts of commute time and distance due to misalignment of housing costs and the number of middle-wage jobs in Bend
- An increasing share of employment in lower-wage service sectors, contributing to growing income and housing and livability disparities

## **City-Related Impacts to Industrial Site Readiness**

Sites requiring extensive mitigation, or cumbersome grading processes are routinely eliminated early in corporate site selection processes. Conversely, mass grading, efficient permitting and context sensitive mitigation on industrial lands keep site preparation costs lower and bring more build-ready land on line more readily, allowing for higher success in securing industrial development and associated job growth.

Industrial development can also be expedited if the building permit and site plan are a parallel process, saving time to site-readiness.



The State of Oregon’s industrial development strategy explicitly prioritizes speed-to-market and site readiness, including grading and pre-development work, as a cornerstone of competitive economic development.

### **Factors that Influence Securing New Development:**

- Unprepared sites are eliminated in site selection before other considerations because certainty is valued more than theoretical developability. Developers in Juniper Ridge and other industrial sites in Bend experience this regularly when attempting to market raw land
- Oregon State Goal 9 requires an adequate supply of suitable size, type, location, and service level for industrial uses. Site readiness is essential to delivering this
- Development costs in Bend are high compared to other sites in the region and across the state. This is largely due to the raw state of industrial land requiring significant infrastructure investments, and site preparation
- Predictable and reasonable time to deliver build-ready industrial sites is substantially longer in Bend than other cities in the region

### **Policy & Process Recommendations**

**The following are considerations for increasing efficiency and time to market for employment lands:**

#### **1. Consider Site Preparation as Economic Infrastructure**

Grading, clearing, and pre-development work is:

- Job-enabling infrastructure
- Eligible for incentives and public-private partnerships This mirrors Business Oregon’s approach to industrial competitiveness.
- Eligible for state and federal funding requests to supplement tax increment and other local incentives

#### **2. Reduce Tree Mitigation Constraints on Industrial Lands**

Tree mitigation on industrial lands needs to be responsive to the type of use indicative of industrial activities. Best practice in peer regions applies context-sensitive policy, concentrating canopy preservation in residential, riparian, and pedestrian-oriented areas while allowing industrial districts to function as intended economic engines.

Amend code to:

- Deregulate trees on industrially zoned land, **or**
- reduce mitigation fees for tree removal on industrially zoned land due to industrial land use demands
- Establish a mitigation bank to create predictable, context-relevant amounts of mitigation requirements on industrial sites of 10 or more acres

#### **3. Decouple Grading from Site Plan Permitting**

- Allow mass grading and site leveling on industrial land through development agreements that include multiple lots before site plans are submitted



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#### **4. Combine site planning and building permit approvals and consider other efficiencies in permitting**

- Allow industrially zoned lands to apply for these two processes simultaneously to expedite site readiness

#### **5. Align Bend's Code with State Industrial Strategy**

Ensure local land use regulations reinforce—not conflict with—Oregon's site readiness, Regionally Significant Industrial Sites (RSIS), and job reimbursement programs for site improvement expenditures.

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### **Next Steps**

Bend's economic and prosperity goals are reliant on adding higher-wage, industrial jobs. Reducing tree mitigation requirements and encouraging proactive grading and site preparation on industrial lands is a targeted economic development strategy to deliver living wage jobs.

The goals of the Employment Site Readiness Initiative are to:

1. Increase supply of shovel-ready industrial land & secure more traded sector (living wage) jobs
2. Allow for mass grading and site preparation to occur prior to site plans speeding site-ready delivery times
3. Develop a context sensitive tree ordinance for industrial sites allowing for more predictable and effective mitigation to shorten time to develop by 4 – 6 months and reduce costs by ~\$2 per square foot
4. Streamline the site plan and building permit process to reduce time to site-readiness