Building foundations in a great family neighborhood

For decades, the neighborhoods in Southwest Portland have been a welcome launching pad for families raising children and building a future. The area’s good schools, leafy parks, and walkable streets are a draw for folks eager to give their children every opportunity. That dream is shared across all income levels and is now in reach for low-income families who will live in the Stephens Creek Crossing redevelopment.

Set to emerge in the Multnomah neighborhood, Stephens Creek Crossing offers a promise of hope and opportunity for families seeking a path to self-sufficient living. The vision for the community is simple — to promote opportunities for work, school and healthy lifestyles.

Residents will have access to job training and resources to find better employment and increase their income, family and student support to help kids achieve in school, and health and wellness education to help families cultivate healthy habits — all this in livable new housing that better links residents to each other and to the surrounding neighborhood.

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Q: Who is Home Forward?
A: Home Forward is the new name for the Housing Authority of Portland, Oregon’s largest provider of affordable housing. We provide shelter and support to 15,000 households throughout Multnomah County. Learn more at homeforward.org.

Q: Why Stephens Creek Crossing?
A: The name, Stephens Creek Crossing, is a nod to Thomas Fulton Stephens, an early settler in Portland who farmed and was employed as a barrel maker. He obtained a Donation Land Claim in 1845 along the lower reaches of what is now Stephens Creek, which also flows underneath the redevelopment site. A naming workgroup comprised of residents, neighbors, community partners and staff, selected the word “crossing” to round out the name to reflect the many types of crossings represented by the redevelopment.
When complete in 2014, neighbors will see many changes in the transformed community including:

- A network of bike and walking paths, improved streets and shared community gardens will connect the property to the neighborhood.
- A Children’s Center will be visible from SW Capitol Highway and will stand as the gateway to the property offering early education classes for children, homework clubs, and parenting classes to strengthen families.
- Job training, workshops and services will be housed in the Community Center, where participants will share a central kitchen, and learn from volunteer chefs and each other about nutrition and healthy meal planning.

And thanks to a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, seven home ownership opportunities will be available just a short distance away to low-income homebuyers. At Stephens Creek Crossing, the focus will be on work, school, home and family—the same qualities that have helped Southwest neighborhoods be successful for generations.

Q: How is Stephens Creek Crossing financed?
A. Redevelopment of the property is estimated to cost $52.8 million. In addition to the $18.5 million grant, financing will come from funds pledged by the City of Portland’s housing bureau, the sale of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and proceeds from the sale of Home Forward’s scattered site portfolio.

Q: What is a HOPE VI grant?
A. HOPE VI revitalization grants are a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Their purpose is to help eradicate severely distressed public housing properties through physical improvements, and social and community services that help empower residents to build self-sufficient lives. This is Home Forward’s third HOPE VI redevelopment. The first two were New Columbia, completed in 2006, and Humboldt Gardens, completed in 2008.
The redevelopment will feature community gardens.

Design details enrich the “geography of opportunity”

If the goal of the new Stephens Creek Crossing is to enhance opportunities for low-income people to be successful, they can’t do so without a safe, healthy and comfortable place to live. Nothing about the old Hillsdale Terrace will remain the same, which gives Home Forward a chance to wipe the slate clean and create something completely new.

“Neighbors will see many changes as the development progresses,” says Mike Andrews, director of development and community revitalization, Home Forward. “We’re rethinking how the design of Stephens Creek Crossing will enhance our programs and services and support our residents as they pursue stability in their own lives.”

Stephens Creek Crossing will feature a campus-style development complete with flats and townhomes, and private and communal outdoor spaces, with an eye toward good, responsible, long-lasting design. Highlights of the current plan include:

- Reshaping the challenging slope of the six-acre site to mitigate a history of environmental problems.
- Clean lines and contemporary styling for the 122 apartment units that blends well with the mix of housing types in the area.

"We’re rethinking how the design of Stephens Creek Crossing will enhance our programs and services and support our residents as they pursue stability in their own lives."

Mike Andrews,
Director of Development and Community Revitalization, Home Forward
Representatives from schools, neighborhoods and service providers joined Home Forward residents and staff to help plan the new community.

A Children's Center at the corner of Capitol Highway and SW 26th Ave. will be a gateway to the new community.

Housing Mix

Stephens Creek Crossing will offer affordable housing for families making up to 60 percent of the average income in the Portland metro area which is $43,800 for a family of four.

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- Sustainable, green building practices to ensure the property is energy efficient, manages water wisely, and is affordable to maintain.
- Improved accessibility throughout the property to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities.
- Landscaped open spaces and play areas to provide healthy outdoor activities for kids and adults.
- Shared community gardens, both on site and in partnership with Hillsdale Community Church, to complement the emphasis on wholesome foods and green space.
- New visibility from SW Capitol Highway to reduce the community’s social and physical isolation.
- Enhanced connections to neighbors through new and existing pathways from the property to nearby streets as well as improvements to Southwest California Street.

"Reinventing a community is an ambitious effort," continues Andrews, "but the vibrant neighborhoods of Southwest Portland provide a ‘geography of opportunity’ that will allow our residents to capitalize on all the area has to offer."
The Children's Center will provide early childhood education and parenting classes.

Q: How can neighbors help?
A: There are many ways neighbors can be involved with the Stephens Creek Crossing redevelopment:
- Learn more by visiting our website: http://homeforward.org/development
- Volunteer to help transport relocated children and families to school events.
- Adopt a family to supply food, warm clothes, school supplies or time to read with a child.
- Join our e-mail list to learn about opportunities to attend events and get to know residents from many cultures.

For more information, contact Thatcher Schmid at (971) 279-9463.

More than 30 social service providers have pledged to work together to provide services once residents return. One of the key partners in the group is Neighborhood House, a local nonprofit organization that helps low-income families help themselves.

Led by Executive Director Rick Nitti, Neighborhood House will oversee the Children’s Center, where they will manage operations and combine their early childhood education programs and parenting education classes into one modern, state-of-the-art facility.

"Expanding opportunities for affordable and low-income housing in Southwest Portland is a high priority for us," said Nitti. "The notion that we can build a community of opportunity here really resonates with us."

Founded in 1905, Neighborhood House grew out of an effort to help immigrants to Portland make new homes for themselves. Today they serve 14,000 low-income children, families and seniors, many of whom represent a diverse mix of ethnicities and cultures.

"Our partners share a belief that for the whole family to be successful, each of these pieces — career, education and wellness — has to be in place so everyone can move forward together," said John Keating, program director for strategic partnerships at Home Forward. "We're surrounded by great partners because this is truly an exciting effort. When good things are about to happen, we all want to join in."

"The notion that we can build a community of opportunity here really resonates with us."

RICK NITTI, Executive Director, Neighborhood House
The two companies—R&H Construction and Colas Construction—are both locally-owned and well-established general contractors that formed a new company, R&H/Colas, two years ago to provide economic opportunities for minority and disadvantaged contractors and apprentices. The privately-owned R&H Construction was founded in 1979 by CEO John Bradley. Over the past three decades, R&H has completed many notable projects throughout the Northwest and has deep experience in multifamily, senior housing and green building projects.

“We share a common goal to promote opportunities for minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses,” said Dave Gunsul, vice-president, R&H Construction. “We want to help these small companies build capacity and take on bigger jobs so they can hire more people and grow their businesses.”

Founded in 1997 by Hermann Colas, Colas Construction is a family operation with two of Hermann’s offspring serving in key executive positions. As the company has established itself as a successful commercial contractor, the Colas family has never lost sight of the importance of giving opportunities to others.

“I see a lot of companies look at these equity goals as hurdles, where we see them as opportunities to build better communities,” said Andrew Colas, president, Colas Construction. “We believe that when you help create jobs, you help create stronger communities.”

In addition to providing job opportunities for minority and women-owned contractors, the construction team plans to place an emphasis on hiring construction workers from among underemployed residents of Southwest Portland neighborhoods.

“"We believe that when you help create jobs, you help create stronger communities."”

Andrew Colas, left, and John Gunsul, right, joined forces to help minority and disadvantaged businesses.

ANDREW COLAS, President, Colas Construction
Because this is such a supportive neighborhood with very strong local schools, many of our households wanted to stay nearby,” said Myriam Demezas, relocation program manager, Home Forward.

With limited affordable housing opportunities in Southwest Portland, the relocation team was challenged to accommodate all of the families that wanted to remain in the area. Although Home Forward has been working closely with local landlords to open up housing choices, many residents found that their dollars stretched further and they had more options in other Portland neighborhoods. Of the 49 households, 11 stayed within the Southwest area, 14 moved to Southeast Portland, 11 moved to North and Northeast Portland, 3 moved to Gresham, and 10 moved outside Multnomah County.

Relocated residents receive help with moving, transportation and social services, and with making connections in their new communities. Relocated families will have first choice to return to the new Stephens Creek Crossing, where they will see a strong focus on building self-sufficiency. Returning residents who are work-able will be required to participate in Home Forward’s Opportunity Housing Initiative, which helps to transition households out of subsidized housing.

Q. Why set contracting participation goals?

A. Home Forward sets goals on construction projects above $100,000 to include participation by minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses. The objective is to help these contractors gain experience as part of a larger team and help them compete for larger, private jobs. On the Stephens Creek Crossing redevelopment, the R&H/Colas team expects to exceed Home Forward’s goal of 20 percent target business participation.

Relocation supports family stability

Anyone who has ever done a remodeling project knows the upheaval it brings to a household. Home Forward is in the final stages of helping 55 families from Hillsdale Terrace pack up and relocate to other properties as the redevelopment gets underway.

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REDEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

- **HOPE VI grant awarded**
- **Resident relocation underway**
- **Demolition of Hillsdale Terrace structures**
- **Construction begins**
- **Stephens Creek Crossing welcomes new and returning residents**

Where Hillsdale Terrace residents relocated.

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Where Hillsdale Terrace residents relocated.
MEET A RESIDENT: Jose Fernando Siguac

Born in Guatemala, Jose Fernando Siguac and his wife, Venicia Blanco, are former Hillsdale Terrace residents now happily resettled in Tigard during the property’s redevelopment. Along with their three children, ages 8 to 13, they are grateful for the support and housing they receive from Home Forward.

After many years working in a manufacturing plant, Jose and Venicia have launched their own entrepreneurial enterprise and formed Blanco’s Green Cleaners, a cleaning service for both homes and offices that uses only environmentally-friendly supplies. “We wanted to start our own business,” said Jose Fernando. “We picked eco-products because they are good for our children, our pets and keeping our air clean.” Like many small business owners, the couple keeps a positive attitude as they balance the financial ups and downs of getting their business off the ground.

Jose and Venicia participated in the planning of Stephens Creek Crossing and are excited about all the new community will have to offer. “We think it is a very good project with a lot of opportunities to help other people like we’ve been helped,” he continued.

“We think it is a very good project with a lot of opportunities.”

JOSE FERNANDO SIGUAC