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Verde's mission is to serve communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach, and advocacy. We continue to create *ambiente*, the powerful concept of a wealthy holistic constellation of family, community and a healthy environment that can be achieved through grassroots organizing, policy change and the empowered self-determination of our communities. Our theory of change is that environmental sustainability can be reinterpreted as an anti-poverty strategy. Since 2005, Verde has brought environmental investments to low-income communities, designed community engagement strategies around these new investments and ensured assets provided direct benefits to low-income people and people of color. Our work is at the local, regional and statewide level by necessity: in order to impact change in the community where we work, we have to seize the attention of those at every level of decision making to act in the interest of communities that have been long under-invested in, and in some cases, actively dis-invested in.

Allow me to familiarize you with the Cully neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. Cully is the largest in Northeast Portland by land area and population. Cully includes the most racially/ethnically diverse Census tract in Oregon by some measures, and called home by Black, Indigenous and many people of color, with a very visible Latinx population. Cully is frequently referenced as one of Portland's poorest neighborhoods. The majority of the neighborhood consists of low-density housing; only two areas, along the western boundary at NE 42nd Ave. and the central artery, Cully Blvd., are zoned for commercial activity. The northern edge of the neighborhood, between NE Portland Highway and Columbia Blvd. is an active industrial area and heavily trafficked freight corridor. Verde's office is located on this northern edge, across from the Union Pacific freight train tracks and directly across from an asphalt grinding facility. Auto scrapyards dot the neighborhood, the dead vehicles are strewn in piles the length of football fields. And that's the irony of living, working and playing in Cully: in a neighborhood where so many struggle to access transportation options, we are surrounded by the discarded, broken and scrapped automobiles of others. These junkyards are the backyards for many Cully families. An environmental justice disaster waiting to happen, one of these auto scrapyards did indeed catch fire in 2018, resulting in a five-alarm blaze that blew toxic, oily smoke across Cully's mobile home parks, affordable housing complexes and the newly constructed Cully Park (one of Verde's most significant accomplishments). It took 30 fire engines and 170 firefighters—a

quarter of the city's force—to put the fire out. Residents were not evacuated from the area immediately, resulting in confusion, panic and exposure to toxics.

Cully's combination of rural features, sparse commercial development and relatively low household incomes have made it deficient in the commercial and recreation opportunities that characterize the rapidly developing inner neighborhoods of Portland, and poses some unique challenges in addressing transportation options and mobility. Portland's inner neighborhoods are, in general, highly rich in amenities such as parks, open space, bike lanes and transit connections. Cully, by contrast, suffers from poor walkability, scarce access to transit, relative lack of open space, and an abundance of brownfields—contaminated, post-industrial land.¹ These features are not unique to Portland, there are environmental justice communities just like Cully all across the United States.

In 2018, Verde undertook a community-based mobility needs assessment in partnership with Hacienda Community Development Corporation, Forth Mobility, the Cully Boulevard Alliance, and the City of Portland to help guide the inclusion of mobility and transportation features in the Las Adelitas affordable housing redevelopment. The site that will become Las Adelitas was previously the block-sized Sugar Shack strip mall. The Sugar Shack club was part of a six-club prostitution and money-laundering ring that resulted in a federal grand jury indictment and was in close proximity to community centers, a health clinic and family-oriented affordable housing. Many neighbors hoped it would be replaced by something that served the local community and their hopes were soon answered. In 2014, the building went up for sale and was quickly acquired by a coalition of community groups, including Verde. Hacienda CDC as the current owner of the property today, has begun the development process for Las Adelitas, which will result in 140 new permanently affordable homes in the Cully neighborhood. The mobility needs assessment is an important part of the development process and its findings will inform the transportation features that will be selected and integrated in the design will be best suited for the Cully community.

The needs assessment confirms that the mobility choices and patterns for low-income households and communities of color differ from their white, wealthier counterparts in a number of ways:

Cully community members are more likely to depend on public transportation for their mobility needs, and therefore spend more time commuting than those who have access to a vehicle for personal use. The lack of access to a driver's license has continued to be a significant issue for

¹ Adapted from: Future Economy Initiative of the E3 Network: Living Cully, by Noah Enelow and Taylor Hesselgrave

Cully residents, even pre-COVID, due to documentation status and fear of racial profiling by law enforcement. Shared methods of transportation, such as car share and Uber/Lyft ride shares have frequently been lauded as transportation solutions outside of owning a personal vehicle, however these technologies and services aren't as well utilized by Cully community members. Significant barriers exist which prevent these newer mobility technologies from benefiting all communities. For example, lower income households and communities of color have significantly lower access to bank accounts and credit cards, and also rely more heavily on paying cash on board for public transit. Furthermore, older community members and many who participated in our in-person focus groups were resistant to connecting personal financial information to phone and internet-based mobility applications. As many low income households are already in precarious financial situations, identity theft or losing funds from smart mobility applications could have devastating impacts, so this reluctance to share personal information should not be overlooked.

There is a very low level of trust in our community in smart mobility applications and significant privacy concerns over not just their financial information but also documentation status and information such as their travel patterns. Their fears are justified: a 2019 New York Times investigation into the smartphone tracking industry shocked many of us into scrutinizing the privacy settings of our handheld devices.² Finally, our community has lower access to internet service both at home and at work and are more likely to need to reduce data use or cancel cell phone plans because of cost or data restrictions. Since integrating payment systems and relying on WiFi and cell phone data to connect to mobile applications is a core feature of smart mobility systems, these disparities are a severe barrier to any equitable transition to "smart" mobility. For those of us seamlessly surrounded by such access and technology, it is sometimes easy to overlook how indispensable it is. The impact of the global pandemic has shown us that a digital connection has become fundamental to surviving and thriving in the modern world, just like food, shelter, access to health care. A digitally isolated person might not learn about and therefore not be able to access a rent assistance program or an emergency food program, a digitally isolated person might not be able to connect to the medical care they need when telehealth is a growing practice.

What then are the solutions to overcome these barriers? 97% of Cully community participants in our mobility assessment answered yes when asked if they thought transportation services in their neighborhood could be improved. The top three choices for the Las Adelitas transportation feature in order of preference were: 1) Cully neighborhood shuttle for Las Adelitas residents, 2) shared EVs and charging stations, and 3) shared e-bikes or scooters. The need for a shuttle to

² <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/19/opinion/location-tracking-cell-phone.html>

connect residents to vital services such as the neighborhood's primary grocery store, health clinics and community-based social service agencies demonstrates how inadequate the existing public transportation systems are for these daily activities. Las Adelitas is 0.7 miles away from Albertson's, the neighborhood's primary grocery store. It's a 20 minute walk, 6 minute bicycle ride, or 3 minute drive in a car. There is no public transportation option that exists to make this connection. This is the case for nearly all the services that residents need to access in Cully: the neighborhood lacks a direct bus line to the downtown core, and the lack of frequency and distance between bus lines requires reliance on a series of transfers in order to connect to key destinations. In a world where time is money, Cully residents have come to understand that the value of their time is simply less than that of others.

The Portland Metro region is about to refer a historic transportation-centered ballot measure to the voters for their consideration this November. The proposed \$4 billion transportation package focuses on 13 regional corridors as the most important areas in the Portland region that will receive funding to address transportation safety issues, transit gaps and achieve the region's climate goals. Paired with investments in long-advocated programs such as no-cost youth transitpasses, voters will have an opportunity to say yes to locally-funded solutions to bring the region more sidewalks, faster buses, and roadway improvements that promise to deliver easier and quicker commutes. The limitation at this time is of course, the limited sources of revenue Oregon has to raise funds for transit service operations, multi-use trails and safety and encouragement programs, largely because of our constitutional restriction on the use of the gas tax and our relatively restricted manner of raising revenue to begin with (Oregon does not have a sales tax). The decline in federal match dollars for transportation projects and transit service operation dollars places a greater burden on local jurisdictions. The Portland Metro region is about to find out this November how much support there is among voters for a large scale funding measure that addresses a whole host of transportation projects. Even if successful, none of the 13 corridor infrastructure investments are in the Cully neighborhood. The advocacy path to bringing transportation abundance and choice to Cully community members is complex indeed, and requires partnership at every level of government and policy-making.

Prepared for and submitted by Vivian Satterfield, Director of Strategic Partnerships, on behalf of Verde. July 15, 2020.