



SB 630 – Abernethy Green Housing Development Pilot Project

What does SB 630 do?

Creates a lottery bond funded pilot program at Business Oregon for a private developer seeking to build a significant multi-family housing and commercial development at a former landfill site. The development must include 500+ housing units and be located within the urban growth boundary. The grant award for the development must be issued by the end of 2023.

Why SB 630 is important

Oregon has a housing supply crisis. The state needs to think creatively about tools to expand much needed housing, with a focus on incentivizing redevelopment of less desirable or blighted lands within urban growth boundaries. This pilot program dedicates \$15 million in lottery bonds to help clean up and fund a portion of the DEQ required environmental and geotechnical mitigation for a site that was once a major regional landfill. The bill requires the developer, once the project is done, to produce a report on how other local jurisdictions with development partners can turn former landfill sites, such as the other 54 locations in the Portland Metro area, into desperately needed housing and mixed-use developments.

Oregon City’s Abernethy Green Project

This pilot program is focused on the Abernethy Green project, a proposed \$300 million mixed-use housing development on the north side of **Oregon City** where the former Rossman Landfill is located.

The site has 62 buildable acres within the Metro UGB and is adjacent to state Highway 213 and I-205. It has all the necessary local land use approvals, with no appeals. **It is a “shovel ready” project, which is poised to break ground in 2024.**

Abernethy Green will have **more than 500 multi-family housing units**, of which up to half would be priced within the affordable threshold of 80% medium family income for Clackamas County (30% of \$74,000 annual income as of 2021).



Unique aspects of the Abernethy Green project include:

- Many retail options that reflect the desires of the community, including grocery, banking, indoor active entertainment, specialty shops, and diverse dining options.
- Dedicated ADA-compliant pathway to the End of Oregon Trail Interpretative Center so visitors can have easy access to food and beverage options that do not exist today.
- Plazas, parks areas, pedestrian paths and a Central Square community gathering area.
- Family-oriented entertainment – discussions underway with Portland Winterhawks to include ice rinks for community use; and, with Dark Horse Comics to house a movie memorabilia museum and working sound stage (potential for major tourism draw).
- Murals and other artwork and interpretive plaques honoring the rich history of the area including the first city within the Oregon Territory and end of the Oregon Trail.
- Street trolley to run between Abernethy Green and the Grand Ronde tribe's Tumwata Village at the Blue Heron Mill site. This will relieve congestion in Oregon City downtown corridor and establish a link to north and south bookends. The project includes more than 530 public parking stalls to create a public transportation hub from which visitors and residents can explore the city.

The project is expected to create more than **3,000 construction jobs, with around 1,000 full and part time jobs** when fully operational. Adjacent roads and public utility infrastructure will be improved and paid for by \$27 million in estimated system development charges (SDCs) incurred by the developer.

Abernethy Green would be built by the Summit Development Group, a local developer which has done major housing projects in the region including Block 3 in the Vancouver Waterfront and Baseline Apartments in Gresham.

Why public investment is necessary

From 1969 to 1983, the Rossman Landfill took in 60 percent of the Portland Metro region's solid waste. For the past forty years, developers have considered the site for commercial and retail development, but the cost for Brownfield clean-up and environmental mitigation has always been a deterrent. A project like this doesn't pencil out, with an estimated shortfall of more than \$40 million due to added environment costs. Public support is critical to help pay for necessary clean up and environmental mitigation if the Abernethy Green project is to be realized.

We hope this pilot project sets the stage for similar housing developments throughout the state. Some former landfills in Oregon have been developed in the past, but none that have created a large number of desperately needed housing units.

A Metro report states there are 55 former landfills within Portland Metro Area, and including Marion, Yamhill and Columbia Counties. Others face similar challenges due to uncertainty of clean-up and mitigation costs. A successful Abernethy Green pilot project should give local governments and development partners insights on how to develop former landfill sites in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Use of grant funds

The estimated cost to clean up a former landfill and make it environmentally safe for a multi-family housing development is significant. For the \$300 million Abernethy Green development, around \$46 million is dedicated to environmental clean-up, mitigation and monitoring.

A public investment of \$15 million through state bonding will help cover a portion of the Brownfield clean-up and environmental mitigation, including:

- Leachate prevention and long-term monitoring.
- Methane gas management and long-term monitoring.
- On-site stormwater management and treatment.
- Environmental engineering.
- Special building foundation and utility system pilings (unique to developing landfill sites).



Health & Safety preeminent focus

Some have asked if housing built stories above a former landfill is safe. Yes, if done right, and similar developments have been successful in other communities throughout the country.

The developer has negotiated with Oregon's DEQ and executed a Prospective Purchaser Agreement. DEQ will be involved with this project at every step of the way and has estimated monitoring requirements for the site through 2056. The DEQ has already determined there is not enough methane gas emitted from the landfill to require capture but will require control and management. The developer has agreed to put \$1.04 million into a trust to fund DEQ's involvement and monitoring of the gas and groundwater wells. This public-private partnership ensures proper management of the site, until such as time as the DEQ determines there is no risk to public health.

The total Abernethy Green development site is 62 acres. Only a small portion of housing will sit stories above the former landfill. A majority of the development that is actually above the former landfill will be parking, parks, roadways, and open spaces. It is important to note that housing units will not sit directly above the landfill. In addition to a DEQ required "impermeable cap" (combination of clay, aggregate, asphalt & concrete), as well as the methane gas mitigation system, parking garages and retail will sit between the former landfill and housing units.

The health and safety of those living at and visiting Abernethy Green is a major focus for the project developer. Significant resources will be dedicated to environmental mitigation and monitoring, with proper and ongoing oversight by the DEQ.

We ask the state to support unique mixed-use projects that significantly increase housing supply, especially within the UGB on lands considered less desirable. The Abernethy Green pilot project is a creative tool to help turn Brownfield sites into needed housing, with jobs and economic development for Oregon.