

# Multnomah County Code Update Project

Planning Commission Meeting  
September 15, 2025



# Presentation Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Update
- Community Engagement Findings
- Code Amendments Approach
- Next Steps
- Questions & Discussion

# Introductions



## *County Staff Team*

- Megan Gibb, Land Use Planning Director
- Kevin Cook, Principal Planner



## *Consulting Team (MIG)*

- Matt Hastie
- Emma-Quin Smith
- Carrie Brennecke
- Cathy Corliss

# Project Background

## Project Goals

- Update and modernize the Zoning Code
- Make the code consistent with County policy priorities
  - Promote affordable housing, social equity, climate resiliency, and customer service
- Ensure housing related provisions are Clear & Objective (C&O) and comply with State legal requirements

***Funded with County and State Grant Funding***

# Overall Process

Code Audit

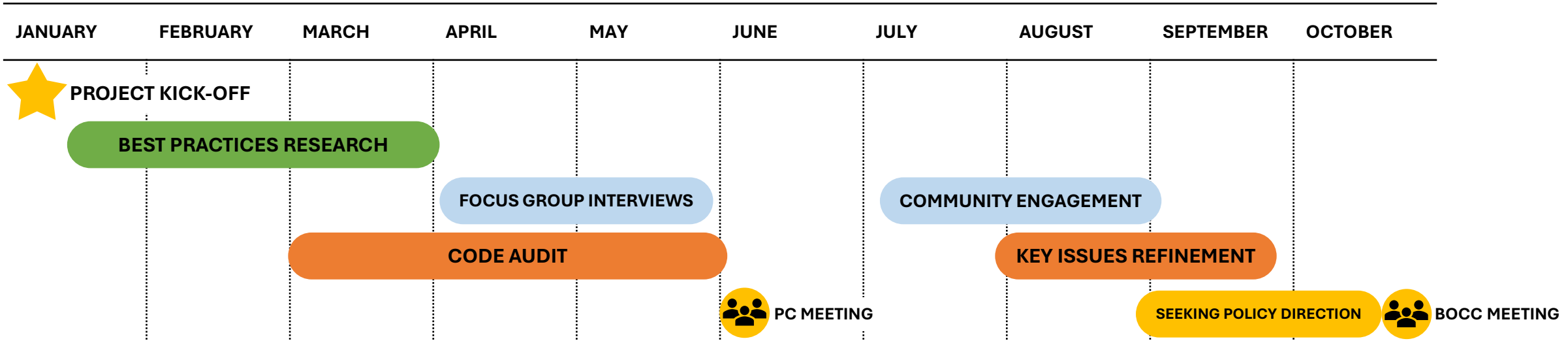
Policy Options  
& Direction

Code Rewrite

Adoption

# Current Project Schedule – Phases 1-2

2025



# Tasks Completed to Date

- ✓ Project Kickoff and Goal-Setting
- ✓ Meeting with Current Planning Staff
- ✓ Best Practices Research
- ✓ Focus Group Meetings
- ✓ Code Audit Report
- ✓ Summary of Key Findings
- ✓ Planning Commission Briefing
- ✓ Community Meetings
- ✓ Refined Recommendations

# Code Issues

**CODE  
ORGANIZATION**

**APPLICATION  
PROCEDURES**

**COMMON  
DEVELOPMENT  
STANDARDS**

**CONDITIONAL  
USES**

**SPECIFIC USE  
STANDARDS**



# Community Engagement Process

- Three in-person meetings co-hosted with neighborhood groups – Forest Park, Sauvie Island, Corbet (NEMCCA)
- One hybrid meeting @ Multnomah Bldg –targeted to Ag community
- Online presentations and survey – available for five weeks
- Publicized via County website, interested parties list, NH associations, social media
- About 120 participants in-person and 55 online



# Community Feedback

- Code language is too complex, hard to understand and interpret
- Lengthy and expensive permitting processes
- Professional assistance needed for even minor applications
- Lot of record and full compliance standards are significant issues
- Clear & objective standards are needed; consistent interpretation lacking
- Support agricultural community's needs & opportunities
- Need for customer service improvements
- Improve coordination with City of Portland and NSA

# Refined Recommendations

- Transition to 1-column format
- Simplify complex explanatory narrative
- Use more tables & graphics to illustrate processes and standards
- Consolidate location for Permitted Land Uses for all zones via use tables
- Simplify application review process and update process graphics
- Consider expedited review process for certain uses
- Make discretionary language clear and objective (C&O), particularly for housing

# Refined Recommendations

- Clarify decision process for the development of housing
- Consolidate definitions
- Update conditional use purpose, criteria, and uses
- Evaluate agri-tourism standards; coordinate with state process
- Address high priority specific issues:
  - Lot of record verification
  - Full compliance and non-conforming situations
  - Parking & other site development requirements
  - Non-land use requirements (e.g., grading and erosion control)
  - Accessory buildings
  - Modification to approved plans
  - Other short-term priority issues

# Next Steps: Code Amendments

## Near Term

- Minor accessory structures
- Process for minor modifications to approved plans
- Process for Agricultural Fill Permit
- Process for Marijuana Business Permit
- Minor amendments to Administrative Procedures
- Other minor housekeeping amendments

## 6 Months

- Lot of record verification
- Nonconforming situations (uses, lots, & development)
- Full compliance requirements

## Long Term

- Simplify code language reformat document
- Reformat text to one-column
- Clarify application procedures
- Insert use tables for base zones
- Right-size development standards
- Address state administrative rules and statutes
- Expand the use of graphics
- Ensure requirements related to development of housing are C&O

## Next Steps



**CONTINUE TO REFINE AMENDMENT  
OPTIONS BASED ON COMMISSION &  
COMMUNITY INPUT**



**BRIEF PC AND BOCC ON RESULTS**



**EMBARK ON PHASE 3 (CODE  
UPDATES) IN COORDINATION WITH  
STATE-FUNDED WORK**



# Questions and Discussion

# **Project Contact Info**

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