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Good morning Chairman DeFazio and members of the Committee. I am Lucy Vinis, the Mayor of Eugene, Oregon and am here with you today to testify about Eugene's experience with the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Assessment grant program.

As you know, the Brownfields Assessment grant program provides funding for local communities to assess contaminated properties with the end goal to put these sites back into productive use. It is a critical resource for local governments to address sites with unknown contamination levels, and the City of Eugene and our regional partners were grateful that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) law included \$1.5 billion in new Brownfields funding to help address the backlog of important projects.

Eugene had the privilege of receiving EPA funding in 2012 and 2017, to implement the assessment program. In partnership with Lane County and our neighbor to the east, the City of Springfield, our Brownfields Coalition was awarded grant funds to address properties throughout the region on both urban and rural sites.

During the grant period, we funded 54 environmental assessments and developed 4 clean-up plans covering 37 brownfield sites in the region. Many of our sites had sat vacant and underused for years, resulting in a fear of unknown clean-up costs and leading potential developers to assume the site had problems that it may not actually have. With our EPA grant, we conducted scientifically based assessments to determine if contamination existed and if so, to what extent.

To add insight into those numbers, let me provide a few examples of redevelopment sites that Eugene has benefited from.

1. One of the largest sites is on Eugene's Downtown Riverfront, a 17-acre redevelopment site which lies along the Willamette River and is in walking distance to our downtown and the University of Oregon campus. We used the EPA grant to test for contamination throughout the former industrial site that had been in use since the late 19th century. The site has since been remediated and is being transformed, complete with a new world class park, new infrastructure for market rate and affordable housing, and new commercial development. We will host our Riverfront Festival on the site as part of the



Oregon 22-the world track and field championships this coming July. By reusing a contaminated property, we are advancing our community vision for compact transit-oriented development that is climate friendly and accessible for all of the community.

2. Our first EPA grant came on the heels of the great recession and kicked off a multi-party effort to redevelop a group of parcels in our downtown that had been a surface parking lots for many years. The once-underused properties in the center of town are now a vibrant mix of housing and commercial activity. There is a new 5-story affordable housing complex, a market-rate apartment building, a hotel, and a commercial building with a mix of offices and retail. The area is vibrant, full of locals and visitors. The new housing has helped to address our housing deficit, and the residents live in walking distances to services, primary employment centers, and transit.
3. Lastly, we used assessment grant funds to redevelop a former auto repair shop into the University of Oregon's Innovation Hub, a space that anchors the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Funds also supported the redevelopment of a 60-year old parking garage into a new pavilion under construction right now, that will be a permanent and all-weather home for our Farmers Market, providing economic support to small farmers across region.

These examples of successful projects underpin the real value of this program. It is an exceptional federal tool because it is focused and well managed with clear expectations and straightforward objectives. The program helps cities be more fiscally sound, through redevelopment of existing, underused sites and reduces pressure for cities to grow out. And as you know within this committee's charge, transportation and infrastructure investments are costly and tend to increase a community's greenhouse gas emissions, while also not addressing the core elements of housing affordability and access to services.

Which leads me to share my thought on why this Brownfields Assessment Grant Program supports climate and equity. As a member of the Climate Mayor's Steering Committee, a member of Mayors and CEO's for Housing Investment, and a newly appointed member of the EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee, I believe this program provides cities the means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through incentivizing reuse of urban sites (build up, not out). It advances housing equity by providing public and private developers the means to address derelict properties and reduces the stigma for redevelopment within underserved communities. It is a tool that supports environmental justice efforts where polluted sites can be addressed to the benefit of the neighbors, which disproportionately are low income and communities of color.

In a bipartisan world, the Brownfields Assessment grant program has broad support from conservative and progressive voices. This is an effective tool. While the infusion of Brownfields funding in the Infrastructure Bill will make a big impact, there are always



more communities seeking a grant than there are grant funds available. Additionally, assessment funds are a great initial support, but to move a contaminated site to productive use requires remediation funding.

To better support cities in our efforts to transform contaminated sites and keep the cost of redevelopment low, thereby allowing for more types of projects that are accessible by low income populations; I ask this Committee to engage the Biden Administration and EPA Leadership to increase the number and size of both the assessment and the remediation grants to local governments as soon as possible.

Thank you for allowing me the time to share Eugene's experience and place into context the value of the Brownfields Assessment grant program. I would be remiss if I did not also mention the extraordinary support that EPA staff has always provided within this program. Our Region 10 contacts and staff at the national headquarters have always ensured that local governments are informed, supported, and kept engaged on the program opportunities and implementation.

Thank you for your service to our great country.