

City of Gresham 26-223

Rockwood Gresham Renewal Plan Extension

QUESTION: Shall the City extend Rockwood–West Gresham Renewal Plan to 2029 and continue to fund transportation, housing, parks and jobs?

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Taxpayers will experience no financial impact from passage of this measure. The Rockwood–West Gresham Urban Renewal District utilizes Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to generate funds for redevelopment. This is not a new tax. Urban renewal changes how the existing taxes paid on a property are divided among the different taxing districts, such as the City of Gresham and Multnomah County.

PROBABLE RESULTS OF A YES VOTE: The measure extends the Rockwood–West Gresham Renewal plan to 2029. The City would thus be able to continue to use money originally approved by voters in 2003 to promote development and services in the Rockwood–West Gresham Renewal District.

PROBABLE RESULTS OF A NO VOTE: This funding would no longer be available specifically for urban renewal in this designated area of the City; however, a no vote would not lower taxes. All revenues would return to other taxing districts.

BACKGROUND: The Rockwood–West Gresham Renewal District was approved by voters in 2003. The District is 1,211 acres and extends from NE 181st Avenue, Burnside and Stark St., to just north of Interstate 84. The District is funded through Tax Increment Financing (TIF); that is, revenue due to increased property values and development in the Renewal District provides funding for District improvements, as well as for bond repayments and grants that the Gresham Redevelopment Commission (GRDC) makes to businesses, property owners and nonprofits. (During the time that property in this area has been a Renewal District, other taxing districts—such as local school districts, Multnomah County, and Metro—continue to receive taxes at 2003 rates. The increased value above this frozen rate goes towards urban renewal for identified projects.) The GRDC, consisting of the Gresham City Council, administers urban renewal projects in the District, while a Citizen Advisory Committee proposes projects and makes recommendations.

According to the 2020 Status Report, West Gresham–Rockwood has become increasingly economically and ethnically diverse over the lifetime of the Renewal District. The median age in Rockwood is 27, and the percentage of residents in the Renewal District identifying as Black, Indigenous or people of color has increased from 28 percent in 2000 to nearly half in 2020. Further, the percentage of people owning their own homes has decreased from 43 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2020.

According to the Status Report, the GRDC has engaged this changing community in the design and implementation of its goals and projects. Plan goals include

- public involvement,
- improvements in Rockwood Town Center,
- increased housing,
- creation and retention of family-wage jobs,
- public safety,
- parks and recreation,
- improved transportation.

Among its completed projects are traffic signals, streetscape improvements, apartment rehab, and a public safety facility. The District has also provided funds for a public-private partnership redevelopment project known as Downtown Rockwood, as well as the purchase of property subsequently leased to community-based service providers such as Boys and Girls Club, the Latino Network, and Open School East. Overall, according to an ECONorthwest report on the District, the GRDC has invested \$44.1 million and leveraged \$179.2 million in private investment funding. It has awarded 86 grants to nonprofits, property owners, and businesses and invested in 17 infrastructure projects.

The maximum debt allowance of the plan approved by voters was \$92 million. According to the Measure 26-223 explanatory statement, over the next six years approximately \$37 million remains for investment and grant funding if the Measure passes. It is important to note that the proposed extension would change the timeframe to utilize funds derived from the urban renewal plan but would not change the boundaries of the plan itself.

For a map of the Renewal District and a more complete list of goals, projects and expenditures, see the Status Report at <https://greshamoregon.gov/urban-renewal/>.

SUMMARY:

Extension of funding for the Rockwood-West Gresham Renewal Area would allow for a continuation of projects until 2029. Approximately \$37 million would remain available to fund additional transportation improvements, housing and job access, small business support and parks and recreation. Funding would continue to come from property tax increases generated by new development in the Renewal District area.

SUPPORTERS SAY:

- Downtown Rockwood is a project that makes a “true impact” on the community because it is an incubator for small businesses that foster community members’ economic empowerment and mobility.

- The campus of community services—including Boys and Girls Club, Open School East, and Latino Network—have brought new educational opportunities and stabilization for youth and families in Rockwood.

OPPONENTS SAY:

There is no organized opposition to this measure.

Sources:

Gresham City Council Meeting, Dec. 2021

Rockwood–West Gresham Renewal Plan Status Report, November 2020

(<https://greshamoregon.gov/urban-renewal/>)

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