

May 7, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey and Members on the Committee,

The City of Gresham strongly supports capital construction funding for Phase II of Gradin Community Sports Park. This 32-acre facility in southeast Gresham has the potential to be a significant asset for all of East Multnomah County. Phase II funding will be instrumental in increasing Gradin's capacity to provide Gresham youth and families with quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Gradin Sports Park was appropriated \$2 million in lottery funds in the 2019 legislative session. However, due to the sudden economic impact of the pandemic, revenue projects did not receive the threshold to issue lottery bonding. This project remains a critical need for the City of Gresham, and funding in this session means we can complete construction and be ready for a robust recreation program as our city's youth work to recover from this pandemic.

Gradin Sports Park is the primary location for youth baseball and softball in the City of Gresham and surrounding East Multnomah County. Before the pandemic over 28,000 athletes, most of them children, participated in sports at Gradin. Yet, Phase II investments are critically needed to provide additional sports fields, permanent restrooms, a playground, and additional parking. There are currently no tournament play spaces in East Multnomah County. This investment will create a one-of-its-kind facility to bring together community-based organizations and children for mentoring and community building.

In its 2016 report to City Council, the City of Gresham's Commission on Children and Families underscored the need for grant-funded park enhancements, noting that while the City's recent investments in recreation programming have been positive, "there continues to be a need for additional recreational amenities, mentoring programming and healthy lifestyle opportunities for children and families in Gresham." Completing the Gradin improvements will do just that, providing accessible, quality recreational opportunities for Gresham and East Multnomah County residents at a facility located in our own community.

This investment will provide more equitable opportunities to a diverse, young, and economically disadvantaged population. There are more than 29,000 residents under the age of twenty in Gresham, and thirty-six percent of our population are residents of color. The majority of students in Gresham are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and more than twenty percent of our households city-wide are receiving federal food assistance. Gradin is located in a census tract with 21.4% poverty rate. Given the need for increased services and recreation in Gresham and East Multnomah County,

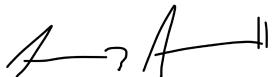
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this investment in Gradin can make a positive contribution to more equitable access in our community.

Residents in Gresham have also been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic: of the six zip codes with highest cases in the Portland metro area, five of them are located within Gresham. As we anticipate our recovery, it is even more critical to provide healthy outdoor activities for our youth to reduce isolation and build community.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project for funding. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Mayor Travis Stovall