

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Friends of Moreland Woods renews efforts to save Moreland Woods, seeks shared strategy with community of supporters

PORTLAND, OR — After more than three years of advocating for its preservation, Friends of Moreland Woods, a neighborhood group dedicated to protecting trees in the Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood, is deeply disappointed to report that on Monday, July 19, Foundation Partners Group (FPG), the property’s Florida-based owners, began construction of a parking lot on a portion of the property. As we lose one-third of Moreland Woods to pavement, we are committed to protecting the remainder of this special natural space.

As background, FPG has recently sold its two parking lots on SE 14th Avenue and petitioned the City of Portland to remove Moreland Woods from its existing Conditional Use restrictions. This code change was approved, enabling the development of a new parking lot and the sale of the remainder of the wooded property. FPG has advised Friends of Moreland Woods that it plans to market Moreland Woods to a developer during the second half of this year but is willing to sell it to the community or a public entity if they meet its financial objectives.

Friends of Moreland Woods continues to advocate for a full or partial donation of the lot by FPG to the community. The site’s mature trees, wildlife, access issues, landslide risks, its location between an elementary school and funeral home, and local support of protecting the natural space nt make this a difficult location to develop but a valuable asset for people and wildlife. We urge FPG to reconsider “paving paradise” and instead create a partnership with our grassroots organization to develop Moreland Woods into a community resource that would benefit children, enable outdoor education, offer access to the outdoors and preserve our urban tree canopy—eve more crucial in the face of climate change.

What is Moreland Woods?

Moreland Woods is a two-acre property on SE 14th Avenue between Duke and Claybourne Streets in Portland’s Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood. Shaded by 20 mature Douglas-fir trees, it is a quiet place for contemplation and a great place for a community gathering. Abundant with wildlife, it serves as a natural buffer for Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and is adjacent to Llewellyn Elementary School. The property is owned by the Florida-based private-equity group

Foundation Partners Group, which acquired Wilhelm's Memorial Home in 2017. The property is zoned R-5 and can be developed to build private residences.

What is our vision?

Friends of Moreland Woods believes Moreland Woods deserves to be protected and reimagined as a community resource that serves Portlanders' needs for open space, provides habitat for wildlife in adjacent Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, and preserves the urban tree canopy. The Woods could easily serve the need for outdoor gathering space for neighbors and visitors alike, both as viewing or access to Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and as a location for outdoor education and after-school programming. Sellwood-Moreland is bristling with development; our group is dedicated to preserving the precious green spaces that remain.

What's next?

- *Raising Awareness:* FOMW will engage the neighborhood and the broader Portland community to create a shared strategy for the public acquisition of Moreland Woods. To support our efforts, please go to our Donate page at [morelandwoods.org](https://www.morelandwoods.org); all proceeds go to support this FY 2021-22 awareness campaign. Funds will go towards awareness-raising, events, and legal support. (A big thank you to the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League [SMILE], our fiscal sponsor.)
- *Private Fundraising:* FOMW plans to register a nonprofit entity to serve as either an interim or long-term owner of the property. This will allow us to seek philanthropic donations from individuals and foundations. Please contact us immediately to register your pledge for acquisition of the Woods—and watch out for our Acquisition Pledge Drive launching later this summer.
- *Public Funding:* FOMW will continue to advocate for city funds, including system development charges, Metro bond funds, and Portland Parks acquisition funds, to be dedicated towards this vision for Moreland Woods.
- *Long-term ownership:* Since Portland public agencies have chosen to decline to own Moreland Woods, FOMW is exploring the creation of a nonprofit that could own the Woods. We continue to invite partnerships with other nonprofits and community-based entities to reach out to become part of our vision.

Thank you for supporting the protection and preservation of this special piece of land.

Friends of Moreland Woods Steering Committee (listed alphabetically):

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