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## **AREA'S FIRST WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT CENTER TO OPEN IN DOWNTOWN HILLSBORO IN 2017**

Hillsboro, Oregon – Hillsboro's Enterprise Zone will soon welcome the area's first workforce and economic empowerment center. After more than a year of planning between the City of Hillsboro and Centro Cultural de Washington County, the historic partnership is ready to announce that the Centro de Prosperidad (or "Center of Prosperity") will open a Downtown Hillsboro office in spring 2017.

Centro de Prosperidad will provide services to connect families with living-wage jobs and promote the next generation of entrepreneurs in the region. The center's staff will focus on helping unemployed people gain language skills and other work skills to assist them in finding work, helping existing workers gain confidence and skills to move up the wage ladder, and helping residents start their own small businesses. A variety of sites in Downtown Hillsboro are being considered for the project.

"This center will help many of our residents get better jobs and launch new start-ups, and help our established businesses by increasing the pool of skilled applicants who are ready to work," said Mayor Steve Callaway. "We are ecstatic that our work with Centro Cultural is about to make this a reality."

The City of Hillsboro's Enterprise Zone Community Service Fee is providing initial funding of \$49,865 for the planning phase, to be followed by approximately \$500,000 for the first 17 months of operation. The City anticipates additional funding for the project as it moves forward, and the expectation is that other organizations and governments will also invest as the project demonstrates its value.

"Centro de Prosperidad will assist Hillsboro adults – especially low-income, Latino, and Enterprise Zone residents – by providing access to culturally-responsive resources that build both job skills and self-confidence," said Maria Caballero-Rubio, executive director of Centro Cultural de Washington County. "Our residents and families need living-wage careers to become self-sufficient, and the bicultural and bilingual Center staff will be open to all, not just the Latino community."

Centro Cultural will serve as the project's lead partner. The City of Hillsboro and Centro Cultural also have worked with Adelante Mujeres, the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, and Oregon Human Development Corporation to design the project.

This historic partnership addresses a segment of the community traditionally underserved by the established workforce model. Among the services that will be offered at Centro de Prosperidad:

- Active outreach to Enterprise Zone residents, including those who are already employed, but who remain below the federal poverty line or work more than one full time job;
- Skill and interest assessments using both tests and individual consultation;

- English language skills (self-paced language lab);
- Case management for low-income Enterprise Zone residents;
- Resource development and procurement for clients, as needed;
- Job placement assistance;
- Business development coaching; and
- Upward mobility strategies and services for low-income workers.
- The project will work closely with WorkSource and other workforce-related operations in the region, building on their existing services. Washington County Community Action, Bienestar, Portland Community College, and other organizations will connect to the program by providing housing, child care, and related support.

This State-chartered Enterprise Zone program provides a temporary property tax exemption, mainly for industrial businesses, to encourage business investment, job creation, and greater economic diversity. The City of Hillsboro administers the Enterprise Zone program in three areas of Hillsboro: the South Industrial Area, the Central Business District, and the North Industrial Area.

Each company that receives an Enterprise Zone exemption is assessed a Community Service Fee of up to a maximum of 50 percent of the abated tax. The Hillsboro City Council directed the Community Service Fee to be used to increase employment opportunities for Enterprise Zone residents.

**About the City of Hillsboro:** As Oregon's fifth-largest city, with 99,340 people, Hillsboro is helping to grow Oregon's future – from microprocessors to vital industries, centers of commerce and green spaces. Hillsboro is a well-planned, affordable hometown with a strong economic base and one of the state's most diverse populations. It is the high-tech corridor for the state and home to a broad range of businesses, large and small, including Oregon's largest employer, Intel. It also has the second-busiest airport in the state and the fifth-largest school district. Hillsboro hosts the second-largest 4th of July parade in Oregon and other annual events, including a Latino Cultural Festival, Celebrate Hillsboro, and the Oregon International Air Show. Learn more at [www.Hillsboro-Oregon.gov](http://www.Hillsboro-Oregon.gov).