



Published Dec. 26, 2025 by Capital Press

By Sam Diaz, 1000 Friends of Oregon Executive Director

Both Governor Kotek's Oregon Prosperity Roadmap and the Oregon Business Plan have elicited fanfare and criticism. As the director of an organization whose members' livelihoods are tied to businesses inside and outside our urban growth boundaries, I am concerned that these roadmaps emphasize industrial and tech development, calling to pave over our farms, forests, and watersheds.

What about the stewards of our working lands: Our farmers, farmworkers, ranchers, forest land managers, and foresters? These are not just professions of the past; these industries are the bedrock of Oregon's economy, accounting for over 618,000 jobs (20.3% of Oregon's jobs), \$30 billion in wages, and over \$42 billion in annual economic impact for our state, according to the Oregon State Board of Agriculture.

Any worthwhile effort about creating shared prosperity must ask and answer big questions: What does a diversified economy of the future look like? How are we creating an economy that takes care of all Oregonians and leaves our state better than we found it?

When I visit our award-winning Portland International Airport, I am struck by a big part of the answer: **Creating shared prosperity is tied to the success of Oregon's stewards.** When I think of shared prosperity, I think of Ben Deumling and Zena Forest Products. They were able to scale up their innovative timber production to create an iconic element of our airport that welcomes over 18 million people annually.

When I think of a future that uplifts rural communities, I think of Libby Wilson and Dallas Defrees in Baker City. These Oregon ranchers are not only raising local, delicious, and nutritious Oregon beef; they are experimenting with different grasses to turn hardened land into pasture, restoring the land from mining.

When I consider where limited taxpayer dollars for economic development should go, I think of Nikita Vincent. She is leading the creation of a community-led co-op in Monmouth to bring food—grown in large part by Black and Indigenous farmers—directly to Oregonians at affordable prices.

Banner Image: Libby Wilson (left) and Dallas Defrees (second from left) of Country Natural Beef host a ranch tour.

If we are to build an economy of the future, we cannot overlook our people's talent, hard work, and commitment to our state. So, why are some of Oregon's leaders using hundreds of millions of Oregon taxpayer dollars each year to subsidize data center development—a use of our land, water, and infrastructure that doesn't bring high-quality jobs to Oregonians, but does contribute to soaring energy and water bills? We pay for the opportunity cost, too; Oregon already has 138 data centers, ranking third in the world behind Virginia and Beijing. This data center development knocks out the potential growth and expansion of other industries that could bring high-quality jobs to our state.

Why are some elected officials and government staff defining “industrial lands” so broadly that it opens the door for corporations to take that land and pay low wages (like big-box retail stores, logistics centers, and warehouses), rather than defining “industrial lands” to attract businesses that bring six-figure careers in manufacturing, processing, research, and design to Oregonians in need of stability?

If Oregonians' wellbeing isn't part of a corporation's business plan, then we shouldn't give away our lands, water, energy, and taxpayer money to that company. Instead, let's call on our leaders to prioritize businesses rooted in stewardship, ingenuity, and partnerships right here in Oregon.

And for those excited to join us in building an economy of the future, I encourage you to buy local, sign up for a subscription with an Oregon farmer or rancher, and the next time you fly out of PDX, take a picture—not of the carpet—but of that Oregon wood.



Ben Deumling of Zena Forest Products gives a tour of the newly-renovated Portland International Airport (PDX), including the flooring that he grew, harvested, and processed in Oregon.

Contact our team for more information about this issue

Cassie Wilson, Legislative Manager, cassie@friends.org