

Portland Housing Bureau

Director's Message

January 2011



Happy new year to PHB partners and community members! The beginning of a new year is a good opportunity to take stock of where we've been, evaluate where we are, and make plans to better our lives and our work.

Since taking the helm at PHB, improving transparency of our processes has been one of my top priorities. Leading the agency entrusted with public resources to create affordable housing opportunities in the City of Portland, I have a deep commitment toward greater accountability. We are ready to introduce our first-ever [production report](#), a central reporting tool that provides a snapshot of our investments in rental unit production, community programs and housing services. For FY 2009-10, we tracked outcome measures for our primary lines of business, and mapped out indicators of community needs, demographic information, and financial performance.

Our goal with this report is to make it easy for our partners and taxpayers to see the results of how we spent public dollars. We want to make sure that the information presented is relevant and useful. If you have any feedback about the data, or ideas about better ways to present the information, [we very much welcome your input](#).

January 13 PHB Public Budget Hearing

As many of you know, staff and community members have been involved in a strategic planning process, which will help chart our priorities, goals and outcomes for the next three years. Our budget recommendations are guided by the emerging priorities of our Strategic Plan, as well as counsel from our [Portland Housing Advisory Commission](#).

Consistent with recent budget cycles, our capacity to fund programs and services at current levels is compromised by the downward trend in our [major sources of funds](#). As always, we are looking at ways to do things differently, so that we may be able to achieve efficiencies and savings in our operations, while maintaining our ability to support important programs and services.

If you're interested in learning about trends in PHB resources and project funding for the coming fiscal year, please consider joining us for our public budget hearing. The hearing is scheduled for 6 to 8pm on Thursday, January 13 at East Portland Community Center, 740 SE 106th Ave. We're eager to hear your input on PHB's budget trends and priorities, and look forward to seeing you there.

In the coming months, the Office of Management and Finance (OMF) will be putting together [public budget forums](#) citywide to provide Portland residents a chance to weigh in on the City's budget considerations. Visit the [OMF Community Budget Center](#) for more resources and important dates.

January 14 Deadline for Mortgage Payment Assistance

There are only a few days left for people to apply for the State of Oregon's Mortgage Payment Assistance (MPA) program. If you know someone who has fallen on hard times, and is having trouble keeping up with mortgage payments, they may be eligible for this program. The MPA is designed to help unemployed or financially distressed homeowners to pay their mortgage payments for up to one year or a maximum of \$20,000 in total assistance.

In Multnomah County, staff and volunteers from Hacienda CDC are available to help homeowners from learn about and apply for the program. Eligible homeowners must submit an [MPA Application](#) online and follow up with all required documents by the *January 14, 2011* deadline. After that time, applicants will be drawn randomly from the pool of eligible applicants. The MPA Application and related information are available online at [OregonHomeownerHelp.org](#). For more information, call 503-961-6432.

Our Commitment to Preservation

Over the past two years, Commissioner Nick Fish and our PHB team have worked diligently on advancing our preservation initiative, a comprehensive effort to maintain the affordability of eleven properties whose subsidies are set to expire before 2013.

Many low-income seniors and people with disabilities live in rental housing supported by federal subsidies. Federal contracts help keep rents low in these buildings, but when those rent subsidy contracts expire, many affordable buildings convert to market-rate units. When this happens, residents run the risk of displacement, and possibly homelessness.

Maintaining affordability of Portland-area buildings for our most vulnerable residents is one of our top priorities at PHB. For the preservation initiative, we have invested a total of \$9.56 million on six properties—maintaining 455 units affordable for our lowest-income residents.

Included in that total is our latest accomplishment in our preservation campaign: Providing financing for Chaucer Court in downtown Portland. Many Chaucer Court residents are over age 70, and have disabilities. Every tenant earns less than 30% of the area’s median income, which amounts to \$14,950 a year.

Using tax-increment financing from the South Park Blocks urban renewal area, PHB provided a \$2.6 million loan to Union Labor Retirement Association to acquire and rehabilitate Chaucer Court. The last time the building got a “facelift” was in 1980, and it’s due for efficiency upgrades and accessibility improvements. Work on updating the building is expected to be completed by late 2012. Our investment in Chaucer will ensure affordability for 84 housing units for our most vulnerable neighbors. While we’re proud of our preservation accomplishments thus far, the work is far from over. We still have five buildings to work on, and our housing development finance folks are evaluating the feasibility of keeping these properties affordable for our most vulnerable neighbors. We will have more to report on our preservation efforts in the coming months – stay tuned.



Moving Forward with Affordable Housing in South Waterfront



Pictured from left are: Housing Commissioner Nick Fish; Dr. David Greaves, Administrative Director, Portland VA Medical Center; Dee Walsh, Executive Director, REACH CDC; and Margaret Van Vliet, PHB Director.

Thanks to Portland City Council for taking an important step toward building affordable housing in the South

Waterfront neighborhood. Council approval of the development agreement with REACH CDC brings us a step closer to realizing the promise of affordable housing in the neighborhood with our Block 49 project. A strong partnership between the Veterans Administration, REACH and other community partners will develop housing and services for veterans experiencing homelessness.

We will have more to report on the progress of the Block 49 project in the coming months. [Bookmark the project page](#) to get updates.

We Appreciate Your Engagement



Last week, PHB and the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) hosted two community conversations about plans for [Resource Access Center](#) (RAC) operations. Even before the project got under way and throughout the construction period, HAP – as the developer and building owner – has engaged many community partners to help develop services and design the building. As we near completion of the RAC, we are delighted with the wide-ranging community support for the offerings of the new building.

As the primary funder for the development, PHB shares a common goal with HAP in ensuring that program and service offerings in the building contribute to a peaceful, safe, and clean neighborhood. Over the next few months, HAP and PHB staff will work with renters, business owners and nonprofits located near the RAC to develop a “Good Neighbor Agreement.” We are working with business groups, law enforcement, service providers and property owners on this process, and I am confident that we have ample opportunity to hear and address concerns.

Warm wishes,

Margaret S. Van Vliet
Director, Portland Housing Bureau