



PORTLAND HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION

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Date: February 4, 2013

To: Mayor Charlie Hales
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Steve Novick
Commissioner Dan Saltzman

Re: PHB FY 2013-14 Requested Budget

The Portland Housing Advisory Commission (PHAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Portland Housing Bureau's (PHB) FY 2013-2014 requested budget. We are committed to the mission, vision and values of the Portland Housing Bureau and support the progress PHB has made in implementing its Strategic Plan.

We endorse the Bureau's Proposed Budget and want to highlight the following considerations.

At this time in Portland, home has a special meaning. It separates those without a safe and secure place of their own from greater Portland. Despite the commitment to house our community, too many have been left behind. The promise of a home calls us to address the racial and ethnic disparities in Portland. This year's budget process has been a particular challenge. There is increasing community need for PHB-funded programs amidst federal and local cuts to meet those needs. These cuts mean moving fewer people out of homelessness, preventing fewer evictions and foreclosures, creating fewer opportunities for new homeowners of color, and building fewer affordable homes.

At this time in Portland, we encourage the City Council to seize the opportunity before you. The Portland Housing Bureau has, with our partners, made progress in achieving our Strategic Plan to help those most in need in our community. Our coalition of trusted nonprofit service providers, affordable housing developers, advocates and other jurisdictions employ best practices to combat issues of homelessness, the minority homeownership gap, foreclosure, housing discrimination, the lack of affordable housing and racial and ethnic inequity. Our challenge lies not in identifying vulnerable people or solutions, but in providing enough resources to meet the rising tide of need.

We believe PHB has made the sound choice of focusing community resources on the most serious unmet housing needs. We strongly support fully funding the requested budget and ask that you support it as well. We would like to request your consideration of the following principles that have rooted our approach to the budget review.

We advised PHB to prioritize programs and strategies that are core to PHB's mission and Strategic Plan. PHB invests in proven, cost-effective strategies implemented by talented partners. We recommended that PHB make targeted and data-driven budget decisions based on performance and the ability to meet outcomes. Our budget process has examined all of PHB's resources, not just City General Funds. We advised PHB to simultaneously avoid cuts to programs with significant leverage and programs without any other sources of funding.

The Coalition of Communities of Color report highlighted disparities in our community. As an advisory body to PHB, we encourage the Director and staff to accept the challenge underscored in the report by creating a more inclusive community and fulfilling the promise of PHB's Strategic Plan goal, which commits us to ensure equitable access to housing in Portland. This means working hand in hand with community members and leaders from communities of color, culturally specific organizations and mainstream organizations to develop strategies that significantly reduce the disparities highlighted in the report. We are a stronger community when everyone has access to a place to call home.

In the past year, under the leadership of Director Traci Manning, the staff at PHB has methodically worked to implement the Bureau's equity agenda. The work of equity is woven throughout all business lines and in every programmatic area of PHB. With the goal of ensuring greater access to PHB-funded programs and the removal of barriers to housing for communities of color, staff has applied an equity lens to all of our funding processes and sub-recipient contract goals.

The ripple effect of this work can be seen in the new approaches our partners are taking to ensure greater access to their programs. At Transition Projects, the city's largest homeless shelter provider, the board adopted an equity plan that directs the organization to examine the racial/ethnic composition of people served and the impact of their outcomes. The organization is seeking new culturally specific partners and will host an equity summit in the spring. Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare has an inclusion and equity staff council, where they are identifying new ways to recruit, retain and train culturally competent staff and staff from communities of color to improve their service to diverse clients. The Minority Homeownership Assistance Collaborative, consisting of the culturally specific organizations PCRI, NAYA Family Center, African American Alliance for Homeownership and Hacienda CDC, have helped prepare families for homeownership and made their dreams of homeownership become a reality. In the 10 Year Plan Reset process, the new framework for our community's strategies to end homelessness, we aim to weave equity throughout all aspects of the plan.

Thank you for your commitment to addressing the unmet housing needs of members of our community and for your support of the PHAC and the Portland Housing Bureau. We urge you to fully fund both the base budget and the add back decision packages. We feel PHB has taken a balanced and strategic approach amidst significant challenges.

At this time in Portland, we are faced with difficult choices. We have too few resources to meet the growing need. However, by investing in homes, we cast our hopes for a future where kids do not sleep on the street, your race/ethnicity doesn't determine your ability to own a home and your community extends beyond the four walls of your house.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse Beason', with a stylized, looped flourish at the end.

Jesse Beason
PHAC Chair