



PORTLAND HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION

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Date: January 29, 2021

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Hardesty
Commissioner Mapps
Commissioner Rubio
Commissioner Ryan

Re: Housing Bureau FY 2021-2022 Request Budget

The Portland Housing Advisory Commission's (PHAC) Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Portland Housing Bureau's (PHB) FY 2021-2022 request budget. We are committed to expanding affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income households throughout Portland. We support the Housing Bureau's request budget and highlight the following considerations.

Once again, the BAC is compelled to remind Council that a state of housing emergency still exists. COVID-19 has exacerbated the current housing crisis, deepening disparities among BIPOC households.

We are encouraged by the City of Portland's recently adopted core values and urge Council to consider all budget decisions through the lens of justice. The BAC supports the City in this change in budget decision making.

The BAC understands the current economic realities brought on by the global pandemic and the need to make budget reductions. However, we feel that housing, now more than ever, is a critical lifeline for all Portlanders. A 5% cut across all bureaus is not an equitable approach to budgeting. As with all Housing Bureau programs, we want to support a budget that is recommended by the Director that will maintain programs and staffing at sustainable levels. So, while we accept eliminating a vacant staff position, cutting funding from an area of the City that has and continues to wait for city leadership and financial support is disheartening. We appreciate the balance and hard choices that the Housing Bureau must weigh in finding areas to cut and request that Council reinstate the grant funding for East Portland programming.

The BAC and PHAC stand firmly in support of the Preference Policy program and recommend that City Council include the staffing request made by the North-Northeast Oversight Committee. Council has already shown support for this critical work by maximizing the indebtedness for the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area. Now we respectfully request that Council ensure there is the necessary staffing to support this critical work.

Additionally, with a forward-looking focus to long-term economic stability, the BAC requests that Council align housing and workforce programming. We applaud the focus on creating and maintaining regulated affordable housing across the housing continuum, from permanent supportive housing to homeownership. However, these units are in high demand with short supply and even with the lowered rents are still unaffordable for too many Portland households. For long-term stabilization, BIPOC and other low-income households must have the income to support all of their needs, including housing. The quickest way to jump start the economy is by building housing.

As the housing crisis continues and the full effects of the pandemic are realized, Portland will need clear, swift, and nimble responses to current and emerging housing needs. Full financial support for these measures are requested and expected. Collaboration and partnerships across City bureaus, other government agencies, and with community organizations are essential to the success of these strategies.

In closing, members of the BAC would like to reinforce the importance of the City's commitment to racial equity and the necessity of viewing all allocations and budget decisions through a racial equity lens. We can no longer afford to wait to support our BIPOC community members. All Portlanders should have the opportunity to access the benefits and amenities that our great City offers. It is up to all of us, especially our leaders, to ensure that budget decisions are made only after fully considering both the intended and unintended consequences of such decisions.

Sincerely,

Portland Housing Advisory Commission
Budget Advisory Committee