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Housing Bureau communicated about bond decisions, did not emphasize ballot measure commitments

News Article



This is a two-year follow-up to our 2019 report, "Portland Housing Bond: Early implementation results mostly encouraging."

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The City promised voters in 2016 that a \$258.4 million housing bond would serve seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Our 2019 audit found the Portland Housing Bureau didn't adequately include those groups in project selection criteria, but the project selection criteria it used appeared to be applied consistently. We also found that outreach aimed at getting tenants into City-owned affordable units used a targeted approach, with early data showing two completed bond projects serving diverse populations.

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We followed up on two outstanding recommendations the Bureau said were in process at the one-year mark. The Bureau did not encourage developers and property owners to attract seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities, but said that one project was slated to serve those populations.

Recommendation not implemented



- **Bureau has not encouraged developers and property owners to attract seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities**

We recommended the Bureau evaluate the effectiveness of actions to reach target populations for non-City-owned projects. This was important because the City was transitioning away from owning housing and counting on other entities to meet the bond's goals. At the time of the audit, the Bureau had not developed a plan to ensure groups the bond was intended to serve received housing.

The Bureau said it planned to require potential developers and property owners to do outreach to seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities, but it did not do so. Additional documents prepared by the Bureau as projects moved along also did not include each of the populations prioritized by the bond measure.

Recommendation in process



- **Limited focus on communities named in ballot measure**

We recommended that the Housing Bureau emphasize ballot measure commitments and report on service to the priority communities. Initial information from the two completed projects showed they were serving seniors and people with disabilities, although those

communities were not specifically targeted for help during project development. The Bureau said it plans to serve seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities in an upcoming project.

Recommendation implemented



- **City added more information about bond projects to the bond website**

We recommended that when documenting and communicating bond decisions, the Housing Bureau provide specific information about the underlying rationale for the decisions. The Bureau implemented this recommendation and has continued to post project information on the bond website and completed a second annual report.

View the [2019 audit report and recommendations](#) and our [1-year follow up report](#).

Visit our online dashboard to track the status of recommendations from other reports