

City of Portland, Office of the Mayor Sam Adams

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The City of Portland Office of Mayor Sam Adams has partnered with The Center for Architecture to create the foundation for a statewide initiative of Design Excellence. Portland has been a national model for integrated land use and transportation planning and outstanding urban design since the 1970s, when the city and community began to concentrate centers of urban activity and infrastructure, relieving redevelopment pressure on established residential neighborhoods.

Oregon has a reputation for progressive initiatives and programs that are founded on conserving the natural environment and elevating the public's understanding and advocacy of the built environment. Through landmark state land use planning, towns and cities have been recast through comprehensive planning and local "visioning" based on the values and character of each distinct community.

While Oregon and Portland have been successful in legislating land use rules and guidelines, there is a dramatic lack of understanding of what contributes to "good design," what "design excellence" entails and how design profoundly impacts each Oregonian's life. In Portland, art and quality design is celebrated where it is found—but has not been tightly woven into every community. There are many parts of Portland that have yet to experience "design excellence." Many of these areas are east of Portland's well-known streetcar-era neighborhoods; They are new and emerging communities that feature demographics and populations dramatically different from those in the more established parts of the city. New design paradigms for these parts of the city are needed, as a development model based on the streetcar pattern does not currently fit the scale of Portland's outer neighborhoods.

Mayor Sam Adams—the chief urban designer of Portland—knows that works of design excellence, and equity in design excellence, are critical to enhancing the livability in all of Portland's 95 neighborhoods. Public works of design excellence in parks, streetscapes, transit facilities and public art have the ability to affect the lives of thousands of Portlanders every day. Private works of design excellence, most notably in the form of buildings, have the unique responsibility of strengthening relationships within their respective contexts, existing landscapes, and adjacent public realms.

But Portland cannot afford to look at any of these in isolation. Claiming success for design excellence in Portland will only result from a truly integrated approach to architecture, the public realm and expressive works of art, implemented across a broad city geography. Portland imagines a city where every neighborhood features multiple embedded works of design and arts excellence, where those have become symbolic of the city itself. We imagine vibrant, livable cities characterized by culture and arts, parks and recreational facilities, beautiful streets and safe neighborhoods, and sustainable, healthy environments in which we work and live. This is the vision for Design Excellence.

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- a. **Budget.** The City of Portland Office of the Mayor and the Center for Architecture requests \$200,000 as part of a \$600,000 total budget to assist in development of a comprehensive and unique statewide initiative, Design Excellence Oregon.

Administrative support	\$120,000
Research and coordination	150,000
Demonstration site	200,000
Public outreach and program dissemination	<u>130,000</u>
TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	\$600,000

Through various local in-kind and matching grants, a funding level of \$400,000 is being raised to establish the initiative and launch it in communities throughout Oregon, beginning with Portland. The Portland Development Commission is specifically contributing \$200,000 toward the initiative. If received, this grant will leverage other funds by a ratio of 1:2.

- b. **Major Project Activities.** Oregon is founded upon an appreciation and love for the extraordinary natural environment in which we live. The Design Excellence initiative will enable citizens and design professionals to attain greater understanding of what design excellence is, and what the components are that should be examined to recognize and achieve design excellence. The Design Excellence initiative has engaged a partnership of collaborators to participate in the formation of the initiative. In 2010, a series of symposia, conferences and discussions with key stakeholders will explore the issues and inform the creation of the initiative.

Portland will serve as the first city to explore how design can be elevated and then apply the implementation tools developed for the Design Excellence initiative. Portland has identified publicly owned land slated for future redevelopment to serve as demonstration sites for the first Design Excellence program. The Portland demonstration sites will house integrated art/design/landscape installations as interim uses on underutilized properties until redeveloped, setting a stage for future, permanent design excellence and integrated public art. Design Excellence installations will address aspirations of targeted underserved communities through a citizen involvement process. The goal of this process will be to bring increased community involvement and visibility of quality art and design to underserved neighborhoods within the City.

A tool kit of Design Excellence resources will be developed to assist with community-led vision sessions and interactive exhibits, as well as training sessions for public agencies and civic leaders. The Design Excellence Oregon program will also establish a peer review roster of designers and artists who can be called upon to advise and assist on facility programming, selection process methodology and project design initiation. These tools will serve as the foundation for the statewide initiative.

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- c. **Goals.** The goals of this initiative are broad and, while promoting integrity and fairness in any design or designer selection process, focus on public education that enables delivery of a higher level of design in the built environment. Issues to be addressed are: 1) Creation of replicable guidelines for design/designer selection that incorporates methods that are equitable and fair; 2) provide methods for identifying emerging talents in the design and arts fields; 3) ensure the energy and financial resources of participants and jurisdictions in selection processes are honored and valued; 4) use the Portland program to inform other municipalities, counties and public jurisdictions as to appropriate ways to select designs/designers; and 5) initiate expectations for a high level of design in the public and private realms achieving design excellence in Portland and serving as a model to other community throughout the state and nationwide.
- d. **Schedule.** The research phase, which began earlier this year, will continue through the fall of 2010. Distillation of the research to help shape the Portland implementation plan will begin in late fall 2010 with the implementation phase of the program occurring in 2011. The model initiative developed in Portland will be basis for the statewide program of Design Excellence scheduled to launch in 2011 and 2012.
- e. **Partners.**
 City of Portland Office of Mayor Sam Adams
 City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
 Portland Development Commission
 Portland Institute of Contemporary Arts
 Donald Stastny, FAIA, Stastny/Brun Architects
 The American Institute of Architects Portland and Oregon Chapters
 The Center for Architecture
 The Regional Arts and Culture Council 2% for Art Program
- f. **Target Community.** The City of Portland and the Portland Development Commission have identified publicly owned land slated for future redevelopment to serve as demonstration sites for the first Design Excellence Oregon program. The available sites are located in an economically disadvantaged area of Portland. Using one of these test sites this will help inform communities around the state on the implementation of Design Excellence initiatives.
- g. **Plans for promoting, publicizing and/or disseminating the proposed project.** The Portland partners for the Design Excellence initiative will team together to provide outreach to the East Portland community and greater Portland. Portland serves as the launching pad for the statewide Design Excellence initiative, which will provide the tools and examples for outreach in other municipalities throughout the state and the nation.
- h. **Plans for monitoring the project and assessing the degree to which you achieve your goals. Evidence of impacts achieved.** The City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Portland Development Commission and The Center for Architecture will establish a set of metrics to assess the impact of the Design Excellence initiative.