

Portland Housing Bureau

Director's Message *April 2011*



It's a great privilege having this forum to keep you updated on the goings-on in the Portland Housing Bureau – thank you for continuing to welcome me in your Inbox.

In this edition, I just want to take a moment to highlight a few notable developments.

First, an update on our budget request. On April 4, we [presented](#) a budget to the City Council that tells a compelling story of community needs. Our general fund request will pay for short-term rent assistance for families facing eviction, and support a wide range of “safety net” programs for people experiencing homelessness. Our work in helping low-income elders who are at risk for foreclosure also needs an infusion of general fund dollars.

You can learn more about our budget request [here](#). The Mayor's proposed budget will be released in May, so bookmark [this page](#) to stay on top of the citywide budget process.

Affordable Housing in South Waterfront



It's been a long time coming, and finally, construction of the first affordable housing development in South Waterfront is starting this month. We are thrilled to have a strong partner in REACH CDC, a nonprofit leader in providing affordable homes for low-income families and individuals.

The project will include a 209-unit apartment building with retail and office space at the site currently known as “Block 49.” All of the apartments will be available to people earning less than 50% MFI (\$25,000 for a single-person household), with 42 units targeted to veterans earning less than \$15,000 a year (30% MFI for one person).

We are celebrating the [start of construction](#) on April 26, 2011, with a small groundbreaking event at the site. I invite you to see the site, meet PHB staff, and our project partners: including Walsh Construction, US Bank, Enterprise Community Investment, Oregon Housing and Community Services, and Ankrom-Moisan Architects. I hope to see you there.

Equity Business and Operations Plan

Creating equitable housing opportunities for the lowest-income Portlanders is one of our key priorities. We've made [initial steps](#) toward focusing an equity lens on addressing current-day disparities in access to resources, programs, and opportunities. We are fortunate to have the collective expertise on our [Portland Housing Advisory Commission](#) to help us think through the challenges and opportunities in dedicating resources to address inequities in the housing system.

It's time to take it up a notch and work on ways to deeply integrate equity in all of our decision-making processes and work functions, and that's where we need some help.

Last week, we sent out a "[request for proposals](#)" for a bureauwide "Equity Business and Operations Plan Development." The main deliverable for the RFP is a comprehensive "Equity Business Plan" that clearly articulates what we need to be doing differently to achieve our equity goals.

If you or someone in your network has expertise in developing an equity business plan, consider bidding on [our project](#). We're hoping to get a strong pool of solid proposals by the application deadline of April 12, 2011.

April is Fair Housing Month

This month celebrates the passage of the Fair Housing Act, which makes it unlawful to discriminate in housing transactions based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, or family status.

While it is an opportune time to reflect upon how far various institutions have come in outlawing discrimination, we know that there is so much work left to do. People of color and immigrant families continue to experience bias in the rental market. There's a lack of affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities. Low-wage families have little access to affordable homeownership opportunities.

There's a lot of great energy in our local community to ensure that the most vulnerable people have access to fair housing opportunities. We will have more to share in the coming months about what PHB and other local jurisdictions are doing to combat discrimination and address inequality in housing.

Until next time, and best regards,

Margaret S. Van Vliet
Director, Portland Housing Bureau