

## Director's Message

### **Budget update**



I want to share some good news on our budget for the Portland Housing Bureau. Under the leadership of Mayor Sam Adams and Commissioner Nick Fish, the budget - adopted unanimously - prioritizes funding for key safety net programs. This includes \$1.9 million for short-term rent assistance (STRA), our most effective tool in keeping at-risk people from falling into homelessness and rapidly getting homeless people off the street.

For the last two years, federal stimulus dollars relieved pressure on the city's general fund to support this vital service. With stimulus funds expiring in June, we asked Council approval of City general funds to maintain current levels of short-term rent assistance services. Council's approval of City funding for STRA

enables us to help approximately 1,300 households on the verge of eviction and homelessness.

Thank you, Mayor Adams, Commissioner Fish and the rest of City Council for stepping up at this critical time to help Portland families.

### **Bud Clark Commons Opening**

June 2 will be a big day for Portland, as we open the doors of the Bud Clark Commons. It took the collective efforts of funded partners, housing advocates and community members to design and program a unique building that serves the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our city. We are proud to partner with Home Forward (the new name for the Housing Authority of Portland) and Transition Projects. We are confident in their expertise in managing the programs and services offered at the Commons.

Please come and celebrate with us at the event, slated to begin at 10am on Thursday, June 2. I hope to see you there. [Click here for more details.](#)

### **Moving Equity in Housing Policy Forward**

PHB's strategic planning work underscored a need to better serve communities of color with housing stability services, and with the economic opportunities our housing construction funds create. In response to this need I am realigning some existing functions to create a new division within PHB that will take the lead in ensuring that a social equity lens is applied to all housing policy efforts. This division will take charge of strategic planning, public involvement, communications, government relations, and resource development. It will also look deeply at our long-standing housing policy

analysis and strategy efforts to help us better target investments of tax increment and other funds, while ensuring coordination with longer-term initiatives such as the Portland Plan. My hope is that this division, with a revised charge, will set PHB up for a more thoughtful and forward-looking housing investment strategy that begins to reverse the disparities caused by some past government actions.

Within the next two weeks I expect to formally open recruitment for a senior manager to lead this division, and to oversee the five PHB employees who currently do pieces of this work. This new manager will report directly to me, and will be a member of PHB's executive team. Watch your email for the official announcement, including job description and qualifications. In the meantime, if you or someone you know of might be interested, please send me an email with contact information so we can ensure they receive the announcement directly.

### **Set Aside Policy Review**

In 2006, the Portland City Council addressed the city's growing shortage of affordable housing by adopting the Tax Increment Financing Affordable Housing Set-Aside. The Set Aside has generated many successes, and it is now time to conduct a full review and update of the policy.

In its first five years, the policy has provided over \$150 million in direct investment in Portland, by providing homes for the city's working families, people with disabilities, seniors and people experiencing homelessness. With Set-Aside policy funds, we have broken ground on multiple new apartment units and preserved homes serving vulnerable, low-income seniors in the central city, as well as funded downpayment assistance to new homeowners, and essential home repairs for seniors on fixed incomes, to allow them to stay in their homes.

Under the leadership of Commissioner Nick Fish, PHB has charged a sub-committee of the Portland Housing Advisory Commission (PHAC) with providing recommendations to PHB and City Council for improvements in the Set-Aside policy. The PHAC sub-committee will meet regularly through June and prepare recommendations for public comments by July. To learn more, visit <http://www.portlandonline.com/PHB/TIF> to provide feedback and see the meeting calendar and other details.

### **Fair Housing**

I'd like to acknowledge the robust public debate that was generated by recent findings of discrimination in the Portland rental market. Housing Commissioner Nick Fish and I are outraged by the audit results that show difference in treatment for African-Americans and Latinos looking to rent apartments. It is wrong and inexcusable for landlords and property managers to discriminate against potential renters based on the color of their skin, or the language they speak.

Rest assured, Commissioner Fish is taking the lead on working with leaders in the rental industry, his counterparts in other areas of government and the justice system, as well as community partners, to come up with a bold, comprehensive approach to strongly enforce fair housing laws in our community. The Commissioner's swift and determined response has been [lauded](#) by our colleagues at the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We will have more to share about next steps in the coming weeks.

As you know, PHB has been charged to convene thoughtful stakeholders to examine and influence recommendations and actions steps for Multnomah County's "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI)." The Fair Housing Advisory Committee examined a broad spectrum of discrimination occurring throughout the continuum of housing services. Among the committee's draft recommendations include countywide funding and support to continue and enhance fair housing services, including but not limited to enforcement and education of fair housing laws. Yet another recommendation involves partnerships with local organizations to ensure frequent and accurate trainings for property managers.

Stay in the loop of developments in our fair housing work by bookmarking: <http://www.portlandonline.com/phb/fairhousing>. If you have any feedback or ideas regarding the enforcement issue, please contact Daniel Ledezma, Housing Policy Manager for Commissioner Fish, at 503-823-3607 or email [daniel.ledezma@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:daniel.ledezma@portlandoregon.gov)

### **Block 49 Grand Opening**

Construction of the first affordable housing units in South Waterfront has begun in earnest. Alongside housing leaders, elected officials, our partners at REACH CDC and the Veterans Administration, we broke ground on a new development on the city-owned property known as [Block 49](#). Portland's significant investment in the project – valued at \$28 million – is solid proof of our community's commitment to providing affordable homes for our lowest-income neighbors. Forty-two of the 209 apartments will be targeted to veterans, especially those who have experienced chronic homelessness. We are working closely with the VA to ensure that veterans housed at Block 49 will have the supports they need to gain stability and improve their lives. The building is slated to open in the fall of 2012, and we will make sure to keep you updated on latest developments.



***Warm regards,***

Margaret Van Vliet

Director, Portland Housing Bureau