

## IMPACT STATEMENT

**Legislation title:** \*Amend Title 15, Emergency Code, to authorize Council to declare a housing emergency under specified circumstances, and define duration and Council powers during a housing emergency. (Ordinance)

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**Presenter name:** Josh Alpert and Marc Jolin

### **Purpose of proposed legislation and background information:**

The purpose of this legislation is to amend sections of Title 15, for the purpose of allowing City Council to declare a housing emergency.

There are more than 1880 people each night in our community who do not have access to any form of safe shelter or housing, and the percentage of those who are among our community's most vulnerable people – children, women, people with disabilities, and people of color – has grown dramatically over the past two years. They have no option but to sleep outside, jeopardizing both their health and personal safety. While our community has been able to help house more homeless people than ever, thanks to stepped up investments and improved strategies, the data tells us that low-income people in our community are facing a housing crisis that, absent extraordinary measures, will not only prevent us from reducing the number of vulnerable people sleeping unsheltered in our community, it will cause street homelessness to increase significantly.

Between January 2013 and January 2015 the number of people over 55 rose by 23%; the number of women who were entirely unsheltered increased 15%, to over 1100, and 67% of those were disabled; the number of unsheltered African Americans grew 48%, to 396 individuals; and 152 people in families, including 72 children, were entirely unsheltered – a 24% increase.

In the context of this crisis, we are seeing the expected indications that the rate of new people becoming homeless is on the rise. In just the past year, we saw a 42% increase in the number of people who used our emergency shelters, and the percentage of people who reported being homeless less than six months increased by 5% between the 2013 and 2015 point in time counts. There are also growing reports of entire rental housing complexes of low-income people receiving evictions and many of those households are becoming homeless.

This legislation gives the city the necessary tools to address the circumstances where there is an urgent and unmet need to provide safe, warm, and habitable shelter for persons experiencing homelessness.

### **Financial and budgetary impacts:**

As this is a code amendment, there are no financial or budgetary impacts.

### **Community impacts and community involvement:**

By amending Title 15, authorizing Council to declare a housing emergency, the city will be able to utilize tools and methods not currently available to provide adequate, safe and habitable shelters for persons experiencing homelessness, many of whom are our community's most vulnerable people.

### Budgetary Impact Worksheet

**Does this action change appropriations?**

- YES:** Please complete the information below.
- NO:** Skip this section

Fund	Fund Center	Commitment Item	Functional Area	Funded Program	Grant	Sponsored Program	Amount



187370

Office of Mayor Charlie Hales  
City of Portland

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 1, 2015

TO: City Council

FROM: Mayor Charlie Hales

SUBJECT: Declaration of a Housing Emergency in the City of Portland

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Colleagues,

On Oct. 7, I will be asking you to join me in amending Title 15 of the Emergency Code in order to authorize the City Council to declare a housing emergency in the City of Portland.

There are more than 1,880 people in our community each night who do not have access to any form of safe shelter or housing. The percentage of those who are among our most vulnerable populations – children, women, people with disabilities – and among people of color has increased alarmingly over the past two years. Like cities across the nation, Portland's income disparity has grown, and rent increases have forced people living on the income margins out of their homes. **We hear about those** who have no option but to sleep outside, jeopardizing both their health and personal safety. While our community has been able to help house more homeless people than ever with stepped-up investments and improved strategies, the data tell us that low-income Portlanders are facing a housing crisis that, absent extraordinary measures, will not only prevent us from reducing the number of vulnerable people sleeping unsheltered in our community, it will also cause street homelessness in Portland to increase significantly.

Among those who are already without shelter, the most recent point-in-time homeless count showed significant increases among some of our most vulnerable communities. Between January 2013 and January 2015 the number of people over 55 years old and sleeping outside rose by 23 percent. The number of women who were entirely unsheltered increased 15 percent, to over 1,100; 67 percent of those were disabled. The number of unsheltered African Americans grew 48 percent to 396 individuals. And 152 people in families, including 72 children, were entirely unsheltered – a 24 percent increase.

While we have made significant progress in working with partners to help and house those sleeping on the street, the housing crisis has changed that. Over the past five years, average rents have increased 30 percent, even as inflation-adjusted wages for renter households have

declined by more than 5 percent. And over the last 18 months, the quarter-over-quarter rent increases have spiked well above even 18 months prior. Over the most recent six quarters, rent increases compared to the previous year increased as much as 10.7 percent; the six years prior to that, rent increases ranged from 3.8 percent to 6.7 percent. As of 2014, there were more than 28,000 renter households earning less than \$15,000 a year that could not afford the average rent, even if they put 100 percent of their income toward it.

In the context of this housing crisis, there are indications that the rate of people becoming homeless is on the rise. In just the past year, we saw a 42 percent increase in the number of people who used our emergency shelters. The percentage of people who reported being homeless less than six months increased by 5 percent between the 2013 and 2015 point-in-time counts. There are reports of entire rental housing complexes receiving evictions; among those low-income households, many are becoming homeless.

With a large and vulnerable population of people already living without shelter or permanent housing, and a housing crisis threatening to push a new wave of Portlanders into homelessness, we have an emergency. We must be able to (1) work upstream more quickly to prevent people from falling into homelessness; (2) expedite the citing and development of emergency shelter and the production of more affordable housing; and (3) provide those experiencing homelessness with secure, dry storage facilities for personal belongs during daytime hours.

My hope is that through our declaration of a housing emergency, the City can provide the facilities and services needed to make a significant impact on our housing crisis – a crisis of vanishing affordability and heart-wrenching homelessness. These threats to Portland's livability and to our own women, men and families must be met boldly and with new tools. We should not rest until Portland is a city of opportunity for all.

Sincerely,



Charlie Hales  
Mayor of Portland