



**Commissioner Nick Fish**  
City of Portland

## **Portland Housing Bureau's Fair Housing Action Plan** **June 10, 2011**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Our Values**

The City of Portland is dedicated to removing barriers to housing choice in our community. We believe our city, county, and state are strongest when everyone has equal access to a safe, affordable place to call home.

Working with our partners, we are committed to enforcing the federal, state and local fair housing laws that prohibit discrimination based on a person's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, familial status, marital status, and physical or mental disability.

#### **2. Analysis of Impediments**

Every five years, the City of Portland is required to submit an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In 2010, we established a Fair Housing Advisory Committee comprised of housing providers, community advocates, and civil rights leaders to advise the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) on its report to HUD. For the first time, PHB commissioned a Fair Housing audit, performed by the Fair Housing Council of Oregon. The test results, released in February, were alarming. The audit showed that protected class (race and national origin) testers were treated differently from the non-protected class testers in over 60% of the tests.

The Executive Summary of the Committee's Recommendations was submitted to HUD on May 16, 2011; the complete report will be submitted to HUD on June 17, 2011.

### **3. The Action Plan**

This Action Plan sets forth the bold steps we will take over the next five years to end discrimination in rental housing. It builds on the visionary work of the Fair Housing Advisory Committee, and provides a comprehensive approach – blending enforcement, education, and increased access to affordable homes and services.

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **I. End Discrimination In Rental Housing**

*1. County-wide funding and support to continue and enhance enforcement of fair housing laws.<sup>1</sup>*

#### Action Steps:

- A. Work with the Civil Rights Division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to ensure that appropriate enforcement action is taken (complete.)
- B. Work with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon and Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO) and BOLI to streamline the intake and referral process for Fair Housing cases for low-income people.
- C. Move to a single point of intake for Fair Housing cases, resulting in LASO's increased ability to screen cases and refer complaints to BOLI.
- D. Sponsor regular meetings with BOLI, HUD, the United States Attorney, and the Oregon Department of Justice to better coordinate enforcement of our Fair Housing laws.

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<sup>1</sup> Select recommendations of the Fair Housing Advisory Committee are referenced throughout this report in italics.

2. *County-wide funding and support to continue and enhance the education of fair housing laws.*

Action Steps:

- A. Work with Home Forward and the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to increase Fair Housing education for tenants.
- B. Work with the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT) and 211Info to improve coordinated information and referral for people experiencing housing discrimination.

Require targeted outreach and educational information sessions for culturally specific community partners representing protected classes and demonstrate an increase in the number of tenants who have been educated about Fair Housing information by June 30, 2012.

- C. Work with Metro Multifamily Housing Association, Oregon Opportunity Network, Home Forward and the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to increase Fair Housing education for landlords.

The increased investment in Fair Housing-specific training to landlords as part of membership in each association will result in a quantifiable increase in training opportunities by the end of the fiscal year.

3. *Conduct audit testing to determine discrimination levels for Protected Classes seeking housing, with special focus on homeownership and affordable rental units.*

Action Steps:

- A. Contract annually with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to conduct Fair Housing testing. At least annually, the newly-formed Fair Housing Advocacy Committee will review the results and release them to the public.

4. *Partner with housing providers to modify screening and credit criteria (such as requiring Social Security Numbers) that have an inadvertently higher impact on protected classes, especially persons of differing national origin and women experiencing domestic violence.*

Action Steps:

- A. Work with property owners in the City's affordable housing portfolio to review and modify screening criteria to increase access to affordable housing units by protected classes. The City will link housing seekers to Rent Well (as a way to mitigate screening barriers) as well as Housing Connections, an affirmative outreach tool to low-income renters, including people in protected classes.

Oregon Opportunity Network will lead a review by members and other affordable property owners of screening criteria to develop modified criteria and educate members about their use.

## **II. Create A Fair Housing Advocacy Committee**

1. *Create a fair housing advocacy committee that meets on an at least quarterly basis to focus on fair housing issues and to be a strong advocate voice for Multnomah County. Committee needs a clear, focused champion in a strong leadership and decision-making position, as well as a diverse representative membership.*

Action Steps:

- A. Contract with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to staff a permanent county-wide Fair Housing Advocacy Committee.

Select and confirm committee members by no later than September 30, 2011 and provide them with clear roles and responsibilities.

The Committee will report to the City of Portland and Multnomah County. It will be charged with reviewing annual data and progress made by the City of Portland and its partners under this Plan.

### **III. Strengthen Public Awareness Of Fair Housing Laws**

*1. Partner with landlord trade associations and other community organizations to ensure frequent and accurate trainings for property managers, owners, regulators and social service providers to understand Fair Housing law and reasonable accommodations and modifications.*

#### Action Steps:

- A. Sponsor regular meetings with BOLI, HUD, the United States Attorney, and the Oregon Department of Justice to better coordinate enforcement of Fair Housing laws.

Better coordinated enforcement will increase the number of litigated Fair Housing cases referred by PHB contractors by the end of the June 2012.

*2. Commit resources for a public information campaign about Fair Housing rights and current issues to change attitudes, practices and public policies, using culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to reach all members of the public.*

#### Action Steps:

- A. Work with jurisdictional partners and the Fair Housing Advocacy Committee to launch a public information campaign no later than December 31, 2011.

Commissioner Fish and partners will raise public and private funds in support of the campaign.

#### **IV. Improve Access To Housing Opportunity**

*1. Develop opportunity mapping as a foundation of housing policy development to illustrate areas of Multnomah County where there is limited access to opportunity and transportation. Commit resources including transportation resources to these areas to increase opportunity and equity, and tie the mapping into the update of Portland's Location Policy.*

##### Action Steps:

- A. Develop a Citywide Housing Strategy. Opportunity Mapping will be a primary tool used to inform the housing strategy.

PHB and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability will identify key partners, data and the methodology for mapping no later than December 31, 2011. Maps to be completed in 2012 will provide a basis for budget prioritization and for the City's Comprehensive Plan update, to be published in 2012.

#### **V. Expand Fair Housing Testing**

*1. Fund audit testing for all areas of the county using the most expanded list of protected classes to determine levels of discrimination.*

##### Action Steps:

- A. Contract annually with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to conduct Fair Housing testing. Each year the Fair Housing Advocacy Committee will review the results and release them to the public.
- B. Direct the Fair Housing Council of Oregon to expand testing for protected classes to determine levels of discrimination in aid of enforcement and litigation. The Fair Housing Advocacy Committee will oversee all testing.

## **VI. Expand The Supply Of Accessible, Affordable Homes**

*1. Increase the number of affordable/accessible housing choices for all household sizes, especially family-sized housing with three or more bedrooms.*

### **Action Steps:**

- A. Provide federal and local funding in support of development and preservation of affordable housing. Funding will increase the number of units in the City's affordable housing portfolio.
- B. Work with housing providers to track the current utilization by protected classes of family sized units in the City's affordable housing portfolio and develop strategies to increase access and utilization by protected classes.

Increasing housing choices will result in an increase in protected classes living in family sized units in the City's affordable housing portfolio by FY 2012-13. Data will be reported the Fair Housing Advocacy Committee.

## **VII. Address And Mitigate The Unintended Consequences Of Gentrification**

*1. Make public investments that mitigate the effects of displacement and that encourage diversity through mechanisms including, but not limited to, "community agreements," housing development linked to schools/transportation/employments, mixed income housing, and rental assistance tied to market rate units.*

### **Action Steps:**

- A. PHB is committed to strategically investing in programs and services to address disparities and the unintended displacement caused by public investment in neighborhoods.

PHB has begun tracking of the utilization of its housing programs by communities of color and has published those results. The reports showed disparities in access for these communities. This data will be used to develop specific targets for improved access for those communities from FY 2009-10 levels.

Working with our partners, we will continue to develop strategies to increase utilization of programs by protected classes. This will result in quantifiably increased utilization of reported programs by the end of the fiscal year.

2. *Encourage the renewal of the 30% Tax Increment Funding Policy affordable housing set-aside.*

Action Steps:

- A. PHB and Commissioner Fish will continue to advocate for strict compliance with the 30% TIF Set-Aside.
- B. The 30% TIF Set-Aside is currently under review. A public stakeholder committee is developing recommendations to improve the policy. Information about the review process can be found online: [www.portlandonline.com/phb/tif](http://www.portlandonline.com/phb/tif).

3. *Focus on resource development to acquire funding outside of Urban Renewal Areas to develop and preserve affordable/accessible housing in all areas of the County.*

Action Steps:

- A. PHB, the County, Commissioner Fish, and stakeholders will identify a new sustainable funding source for affordable housing.

## **VIII. Increase Funding For Safety-Net Programs For Low-Income And Vulnerable Populations**

*1. Continue, and consider increasing funding for, Rent Assistance for low income residents.*

### Action Steps:

- A. Secure \$1.9 million in City general funds to support short term rent assistance in FY11-12 (complete.)
- B. Multnomah County and Home Forward commit to continued funding for short-term rent assistance and other programs that prevent homelessness and support rapid re-housing.

*2. Increase funding for social services known to assist in stabilizing households, including but now limited to addiction services, childcare, employment assistance, and other support services.*

### Action Steps:

- A. PHB and its jurisdictional partners will advocate for increased resources for supportive services that assist people in stabilizing housing.

*3. Continue funding development of subsidized, accessible housing units for individuals and families below 30% MFI, working to increase the number of units available to meet the demand. Develop subsidies to encourage private landlords to rent to low-income individuals at little to no risk to them.*

### Action Steps:

- A. Provide federal and local funding in support of the development and preservation of affordable housing. Funding will increase the number of units in the City's affordable housing portfolio.

## CONCLUSION

In Portland, we will not tolerate discrimination in housing. This Action Plan sets forth our road map for moving forward over the next five years. We will not cure this disease overnight. It will take persistence, collaboration, and creativity.

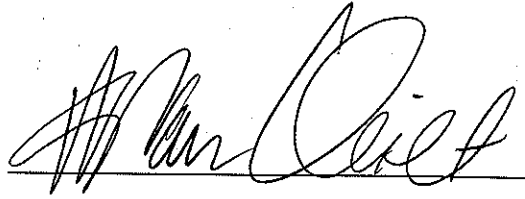
We commit to be bold in our actions and accountable for results.

Thanks to the Fair Housing Advisory Committee for its groundbreaking work, our partners for joining us in this effort, and the team at PHB for their remarkable public service.



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Nick Fish  
Commissioner



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Margaret Van Vliet  
Director