



Office of Mayor Tom Potter
City of Portland

STATEMENT FROM MAYOR TOM POTTER ON FAIR HOUSING

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARING WEDNESDAY

The Housing and Community Development Commission (HCDC) will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday (July 6, 2005) to continue the dialogue with the community about housing. Specifically, HCDC is updating our Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI), which is HUD's procedure for having every community consider two key questions:

- What are the barriers to fair housing in our community?
- What strategies should we employ to overcome them?

I invite you to testify or submit written comments about how we can devise new ways to expand housing choices for all Portland residents, ensure balance in our neighborhoods and work together to keep Portland a diverse and welcoming city.

There have been a number of concerns and questions raised about our City's housing policies. Some residents of our community have asked tough questions about our housing agencies, and I welcome these comments with the belief that anything that sparks community dialogue and interest is a positive step.

But that dialogue also must be guided by accurate and fair information. Several misperceptions continue:

Officials are indifferent the needs and concerns of neighborhoods in which we locate affordable housing..

I strongly believe that every neighborhood should enjoy a diversity of housing and employment opportunities. I also believe that every family should have some choice about where they call home within our city. The city's housing policy since 1996 includes the goal of avoiding the concentration of poverty in any area, and the City's Location Policy limits the development of new units of City-subsidized affordable housing in certain census block groups where poverty is highly concentrated. You can read this policy online at http://www.pdc.us/housing_serv/general/iam.asp. The spirit of this policy is important— City-funded housing should not unnecessarily further the

concentration of poverty. But in a time of limited state and federal dollars, and as our community grows and its demographics change, I think we are facing new critical questions about housing *choices* and *opportunities*. Are we spending our limited public housing resources effectively and efficiently? Are we offering all our families some choice which neighborhood they call home and which neighborhood school their children will attend? How do we prevent the changing housing market from displacing our lowest-income families from the neighborhoods they have called home for many years? As we re-examine our housing policies, we must consider how we provide the best opportunities and choices for the greatest number of our families who live with the threat or reality of homelessness. These are tough questions that require good public policy.

Officials don't have, or won't share, housing data.

I believe that good data is required for smart decision making. Staff at the Bureau of Housing and Community Development, the Portland Development Commission, the Housing Authority of Portland and the Bureau of Planning agree. As they work together to update to our Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI), they will compile and make public important data and maps to guide our public discussion.

The updated AI, slated for completion in September (at which time it will be discussed and adopted by City Council and HCDC), will rely on current data, maps, and broad public input to set the stage for constructive policy discussions and decisions about our future housing and economic development efforts, including a look at the relevance of our current housing Location Policy. I can understand the desires of some to have this data as soon as possible, but it is more important to me that what we produce be clear, consistent and accurate – as well as appropriately protecting the privacy of public housing clients.

There is no one in City Hall assigned to this issue.

Policy managers Sara Culp and Rochelle Lessner continue as my liaisons to BHCD, HAP and PDC, and work very closely with Commissioner Erik Sten, our housing commissioner in charge of the Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD).

Our region is short about 90,000 units of affordable housing over the next 10 years. Adequate affordable housing is a basic right. It boosts our economic development. It also addresses problems like homelessness, childhood poverty and low student achievement. There are several good sources of information that will help you be a part of our solution:

- You can learn more about the regional effort to identify long-term, sustainable resources for affordable housing at: <http://www.pdc.us/hsg-brc/> .
- Find out more about local housing priorities in the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan on BHCD's website: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bhcd/index.cfm?c=37847> (section 4).

And please come be a part of Wednesday night's meeting at the Multnomah County Building (501 SE Hawthorne, First Floor Board Room). For more information on the

hearing, you can contact Ruth Benson at the Bureau of Housing and Community Development, (503) 823-2392. You can also submit testimony by email to BHCD: bhcdinfo@ci.portland.or.us; or by letter: attention Fair Housing, 421 SW 6th Ave., Room 1100, Portland, OR 97204. Testimony must be received by July 29.