



Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
City of Portland

Dear BDS Staff,

I'm writing to let you know that Rebecca Esau has accepted my offer to be the permanent Director of the Bureau of Development Services. I offered her the job because she brings a high level of competence, diligence, passion and dedication to this position at a critical time for the city. Since she took the helm as Interim Director in April, Rebecca has worked extremely hard to provide clear direction and vision, and bring a level of stability.

Rebecca will be the second woman to serve as Director of the Bureau in its more than 100-year history. I expect her to showcase the bureau's improved emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion, and I have asked her to continue concentrating on attracting and retaining outstanding employees. I have confidence that Rebecca, working with Dora Perry and others, will continue to do the work necessary to make the bureau a welcoming place for all employees. My expectation is that BDS and its staff will work hard internally and in the community to better support more equitable outcomes for all Portlanders.

The bureau – led by Rebecca, her management team and staff – has achieved significant accomplishments this year. These include:

Handling record-breaking workload, including permitting more than \$502.4 million in apartment/condo development so far this year. We are on track to exceed the most recent high-water mark for such development by more than \$200 million.

Initiating and leading an inter-agency working group made up of the Directors of all the bureaus with staff involved in development review to collaboratively improve the permitting process. This is in response to the City Budget Office's analysis of the permitting system that called for greater coordination between bureaus to resolve bottlenecks in the system.

Updating the software the bureau relies on to process permits and creating a clear pathway to implement an updated version of the permitting software. She has also pushed to transition to electronic plan review as quickly as possible.

Implementing changes to the design review process identified by the Design Overlay Zone Assessment report.

Launching a reorganization of the bureau aimed at aligning BDS with its service goals.

Initiating specific projects with staff to develop ways to improve the services BDS provides, such as reducing wait times in the permit center and the development of a call center for customers.

Speeding up the recruitment and hiring process as well as advocating for workplace improvements for employees.

I'm looking forward to working with Rebecca and BDS staff to continue to improve our ability to meet the demand for permitting services. In addition to improving our culture of customer service, I'm excited to get to work on the following strategic initiatives:

- Bringing back the bureau's "Get Legal" program to help property owners identify resources and get technical assistance that will enable them to come into compliance with building and zoning code requirements.
- Hiring a small business liaison to help small businesses and nonprofits navigate the development review process and identify improvements that will make it easier for all BDS staff to offer assistance to help improve our local economy.
- Supporting the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other innovative infill strategies that will enable our city to provide more accessible and affordable housing.
- Establishing a communications team that will help applicants better understand how to prepare a permit application and navigate the development review process. The communications team will also help BDS staff better understand how to help the bureau achieve its objectives.

We need to work together to make sure we stay on course on critical projects: continuing our labor/management collaboration; maintaining close alignment with BTS and other bureaus on our technology initiative, the Portland Online Permitting System (POPS); and reinforcing our work with our partner bureaus to make the whole development review system work better for all of us.

I know it has been a difficult time to be a BDS employee. We've had a record amount of work. We've seen turnover in management. Please know that I am committed to doing whatever I can to help make your jobs secure and fulfilling. Appointing Rebecca is part of that equation. She has strong support from the development community, neighborhoods, BDS staff and leadership at other city bureaus, as well as that of the Mayor, the City Council and me. That's why I determined that doing a national search when we have already identified the best candidate would be a waste of taxpayer dollars at a critical time. Please join me in giving her your enthusiastic support.

Thank you for your hard work and please take care,

Commissioner Eudaly