

City of
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Sam Adams, Mayor

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Portland City Council Approves Immediate Actions in Response to Disparity Study Final Report

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This afternoon, the Portland City Council approved a set of immediate actions in response to the [Disparity Study Final Report](#). A draft of the report was released in January, and the final report accepted by Council today in a 4-0 vote.

The study's findings were mixed, generally finding some disparity on City and PDC-owned contracts, while discovering clear disparity on projects that received PDC funds without direct project management. From the study's statistical results, the anecdotal evidence, and public comments in response to the study draft, the City has legal grounds to continue and enhance current equity programs.

"Portland is a city that is striving to become the most equitable in America. We cannot keep doing the same things and using the same approaches and expecting different results," Mayor Sam Adams said. "We are going to have to think differently, explore alternative contracting methods, eliminate discrimination and inequitable barriers, and create a culture of equity among all the bureaus and our partners. There is a sense of urgency to this task—contractors are already losing ground in a difficult economy, and we must do everything possible to provide more equal opportunities."

Mayor Adams also thanked Commissioner Nick Fish for leading the Disparity Study, a nearly two-year-long process that included citizen oversight.

“City Council initiated this Disparity Study based on a simple idea. We can and must do better,” Commissioner Nick Fish said. “The time for analysis is over. With the acceptance of this report, Council must move forward tirelessly to remove barriers and create opportunities for all.”

The council directed immediate actions, including:

- Conduct quarterly outreach events, issue electronic notifications of solicitations, assist general contractors with outreach for sub-contracting opportunities.
- Initiate bureau representative meetings and look for alternative contracting opportunities as appropriate to encourage maximum opportunities for minority- and women-owned firms.
- Graduate all current Sheltered Market contractors (October 2011). Cease the Sheltered Market Program as it currently exists and create an improved and strengthened program to replace it.
- Review and revise the Contractor Prequalification Program. Require all requests for project specific special prequalification to be evaluated and approved by the Chief Procurement Officer before being applied. Approval of all prequalification requests \$250,000 and under will be based upon bonding capacity (as provided by a surety). Applications \$250,000 and under will not be forwarded to the bureaus for evaluation of additional prequalification criteria.

The council also directed the City’s Office of Management and Finance to work with the Fair Contracting Forum, other interested organizations, City bureaus and PDC to “review the guidance provided by the disparity study and bring forward recommendations to City Council to expand and strengthen the city's equity programs no later than February 2012.”

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