

The Bond opens doors for minority contractors

The Parks Replacement Bond, along with its visible benefits in Portland parks, offers many opportunities and experiences for small local businesses.

Nate McCoy is working to make sure minority contractors can actively participate in these opportunities. He's Executive Director of the local chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC). Some of NAMC's 42 members—African American, Native American, Asian, and Hispanic—are small businesses new to government contracting, while others are more experienced. Nate helps them navigate the proposal process and connect with public agencies and large general contractors.

As a black man, architect, construction project coordinator, and lifelong Portlander, Nate speaks from experience when he says, "Minority contractors have typically been disconnected from construction opportunities on public or private projects." He works with PP&R to ensure language in proposal requests offers opportunities for emerging businesses, with a focus on the community benefits a local contractor can bring to a project.

Nate wants to ensure that a significant percentage of Bond contracts be awarded to the "M" in D/M/W/ESB (Disadvantaged, Minority, Women-Owned, and Emerging Small Businesses). He is optimistic and points to the Bond's Parklane Park Loo Project which used a minority-owned business as a recent success.

While large general contractors have 300 to 400 employees, the largest local NAMC minority contractor employs 65. "The Bond is a good fit for NAMC members because it gives them the chance to work on smaller-scale projects," Nate says. "There are lots more opportunities for maintenance contracts, compared to the high visibility projects that require a large company infrastructure."

Nate grew up in inner Southeast Portland. His mom could step out on their front porch on Southeast 20th Avenue and call him home from Colonel Summers Park. There, in the Buckman neighborhood, he was fascinated by the bay windows, turrets, and decorative millwork of nearby Queen Anne Victorian homes. Summer art programs at the park fanned that flame. "By age seven," he says, "I knew I wanted to be an architect."

Today, Nate's passionate about helping minority contractors benefit from Portland's growth. In work done for the Parks Replacement Bond, he notes that they can gain experience and connections. "The Bond opens doors and awareness of future projects."

