

"No one is happy with the status quo"

From sidewalks to social services, Charlie Hales talks about what to expect as he takes the reins as Portland's new mayor

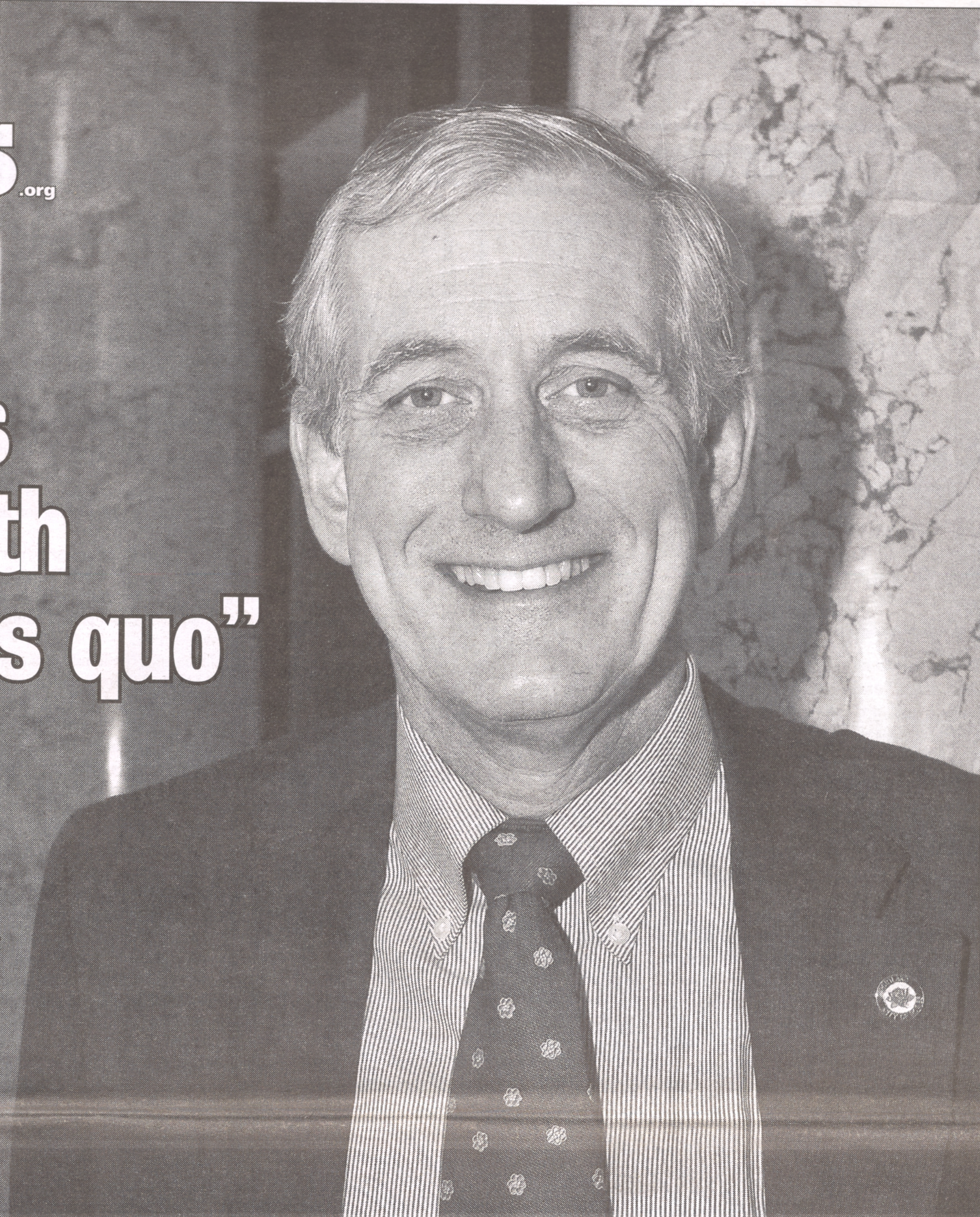


PHOTO BY KRISTINA WRIGHT

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New Mayor Charlie Hales recently sat down with Street Roots to talk about the state of the city, and what's to come.

Hales is inheriting a possibly \$25 million dollar deficit and recently took all 27 city bureaus under his control. Hales will be leading a challenging, yet hopeful next year in Portland.

Street Roots asked the mayor about his plans for Right 2 Dream Too, sidewalks, housing and homeless services, police reform, transportation and more. Here's what he had to say:

Israel Bayer: *You are walking into a brutal budget cycle with a potential deficit of \$25 million dollars. What's the process for determining what should be cut and what shouldn't?*

Charlie Hales: First, it's going to be very open. The mayor in our system of government has the ability to disappear into a room for a couple of months and then produce the mayor's proposed budget. I am certainly not going to do that. I am going to open the doors to that room and invite the rest of the City Council first and then the whole community in to say, 'This is a tough

situation, we are all going to have to face these difficulties together. Let's put everything on the table.'

We are starting off with a big hole in the city's budget. There is no bag of tricks in terms of some new revenue source or extra money that we can lay our hands on. It's managing scarcity. Now, that's the bad news: It's going to be a tough budget.

The good news is that the economy is improving. The city's forecast for its own budget, over time, is positive. So over the next few years, whatever base we build this year we'll be building on that base. We won't be cutting, and then cutting again.

I.B.: *Some city bureaus are also facing federal cuts. Will these cuts be taken into consideration when determining the loss of program support from the city?*

C.H.: It's really important that you mention that. One of the first things we are going to do is have the county leadership come over and brief us on their situation before we even start thinking about our budget. We are partners with Multnomah County, particularly in homelessness,

mental health and housing. In those areas, we are joined at the hip. We need to know how strong our partner is or what our partner's problems are. We will then look at how that's related to federal cuts and what it all means.

I.B.: *Should the city and county work toward consolidating their programs, specifically for housing and homeless services?*

C.H.: Yes. And that time is now. We will at least start to ask those questions. The example I've used in trying to explain this multiple levels of government, is, if you drove over from City Hall to the east side, you drove on a city street, got on a county bridge and touched down on a city street on the other side. If there is a homeless juvenile on the bridge while you crossed, that guy was Multnomah County's responsibility. If there was a homeless adult on the bridge, she's the city's responsibility. That's how crazy the patchwork is of what the city and the county do. Anyone can look at those examples and reach the conclusion that we might be able to be more efficient.

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