

METRO, from page 3

strategy. The task force called on Metro to offer technical assistance, facilitate dialogue on funding sources and generally use more carrots, rather than sticks, to encourage the creation of more affordable housing.

The strategy set a voluntary goal of developing over 90,000 units of affordable housing across the region by 2017. Metro struggled to get local governments to even report on their efforts, and the agency hasn't tracked whether the 90,000-unit goal was met.

"Though many jurisdictions considered actions to promote affordable housing, few adopted them," reads a 2011 internal Metro memo outlining the agency's history on the issue.

The reason why boils down to money.

Metro spokesperson Jim Middaugh says that the agency could find money for affordable housing, not unlike how it's helping fund the Convention Center Hotel. But doing so, he says, would be a tall order.

"I guess the bottom line is that if the only way Metro Council could fund affordable housing would be to go to voters," he says. "And the mood for those types of investments is not an easy sell."

Ted Reid, a senior regional planner at Metro, says that the reason Metro has skewed toward voluntary requirements with affordable housing is because such housing require subsidies, and the agency has been

reluctant to place an unfunded mandate on local jurisdictions.

committee was the creation of a new regional affordable housing fund. Metro would dedicate an initial \$1 million to the fund that would be used to leverage money from public, private and charitable entities. The fund would grow to between \$10 and \$20 million and would be loaned out at low-interest rates to affordable housing developments throughout the region.

Liberty, who championed the idea, says that Metro Council voted to create the fund on a 4-3 vote. However, when the economy crashed in 2008 it made it much more difficult for the fund to attract matching capital. In 2009, the money was reprogrammed.

In 2010, Liberty made a push for stronger affordable housing requirements in Metro's growth planning guidelines, but the requirements were watered down after push back from real estate interests. Liberty left council shortly after.

"I think Metro's lack of courage has resulted in it not fulfilling the role it should have fulfilled," says Liberty.

But despite some set backs, Metro has taken some concrete steps to increase affordable housing. Since 1998, Metro's Transit-Oriented Development program has been using federal transportation dollars to fund housing near light rail stations.

Meganne Steele, a senior development project manager at Metro, notes in an e-mail exchange that developing affordable housing has been a goal of each project funded through the program. She stated that of the 2,800 housing units constructed to date through the program, more than half are geared toward lower-income households, and 662 are restricted for households earning up to 60 percent of median family income.

Gerry Uba, a project manager who has worked at Metro for 26 years, doesn't think the agency's affordable housing efforts have been a wash.

"All that work was not a failure because educating the region outside of Portland to be aware of the need for affordable housing is a big accomplishment for this region," says Uba.

Uba says that requiring the suburbs to at least consider encouraging the creation of affordable housing has resulted in some housing actually being built in the suburbs.

In August, Metro Council signed off on Beaverton's plans to exempt nonprofit affordable housing developers, similar to what has been done in Portland and Tigard.

"That is a big shift from the way things have been in the past," says Metro Councilor Sam Chase. "It's actually a tax exemption. It's not theoretical plans that say, 'we want

more affordable housing.'"

Before being elected to Metro Council in 2012, Chase worked for a variety of organizations seeking to increase affordable housing, as well for two Portland City Council

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members, and was actively involved in the push to get Metro to require more affordable housing in the 1990s. He says that Metro hasn't been as proactive as it could have been in securing affordable housing, but he's optimistic that it's changing.

He points to Metro throwing its lobbying weight behind a bill that squeaked through the legislature that will prohibit landlords from discriminating against participants of a federal housing program.

In August, Metro launched its Equity Strategy Advisory Committee, which is intended to help the agency look more intentionally at how all of its actions impact disadvantaged groups, from its bonding process to transportation planning to how it spends money on natural areas.

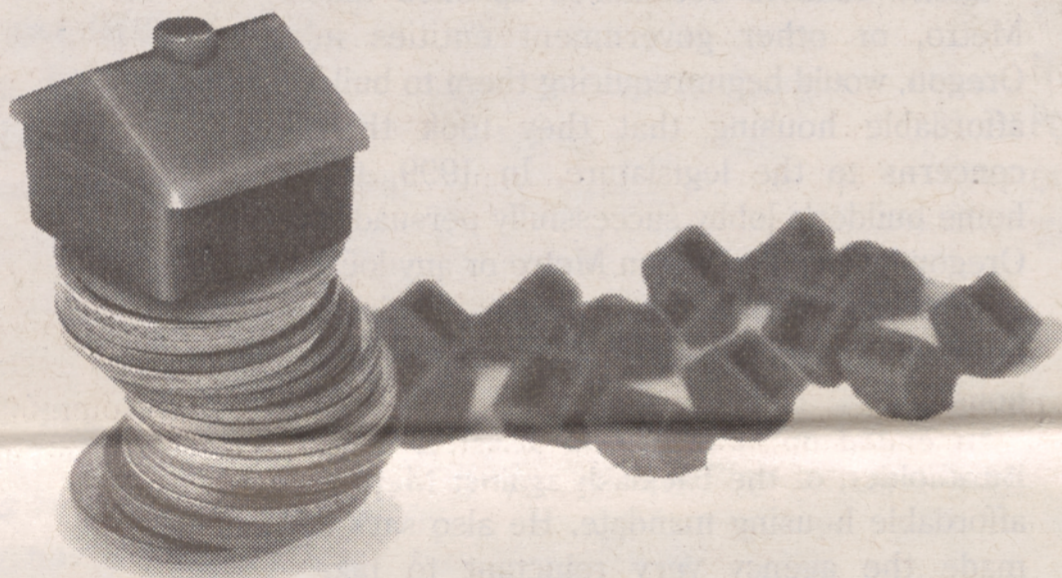
"Metro's been going for a long time without applying that equity and poverty filter on how they are serving everyone in our region, and I think that filter is going to be really helpful," says Chase of his hopes for the committee.

Chase wants to use a broad range of strategies that aren't exclusively related to housing that could lift up disadvantaged groups, and expects the committee to help.

For example, with the construction of the Convention Center Hotel, which he supports, he says he plans to push Metro to make good use of women and minority-owned contractors on the project. Doing so, says Chase, could go a long ways towards lifting up disadvantaged groups.

If Metro does make this pivot it could signal a change in the nature of the agency.

"Metro doesn't like to deal with affordable housing because it's politically sensitive," says Liberty. "It's about inequality; it deals with social justice issues. They're happier dealing with park provisions."



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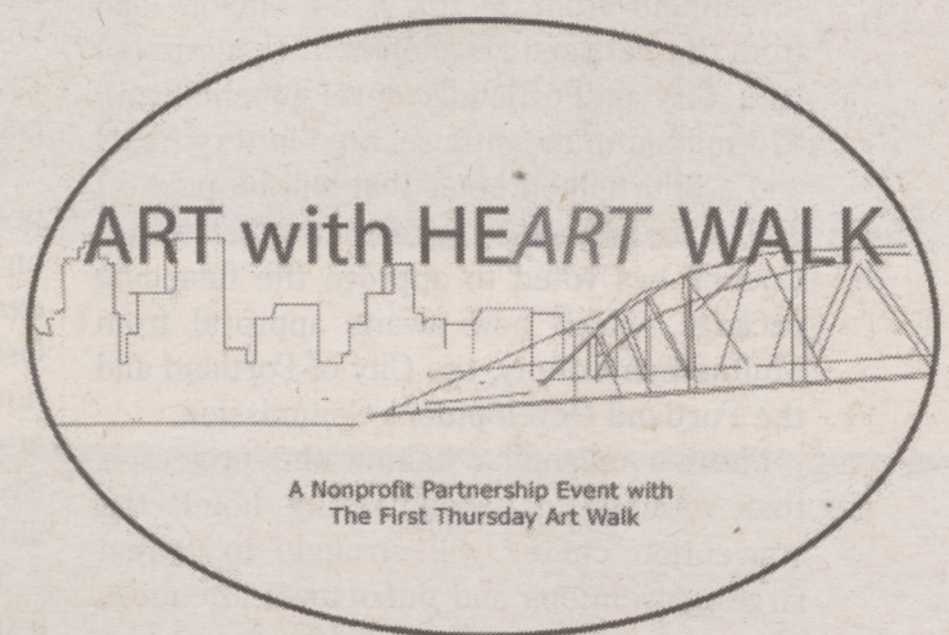
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8 to 9 p.m. Post-walk reception at Backspace

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Central City Concern & Street Roots - NW Broadway/Burnside