

# Housing solution needs menu of options

Mayor Charlie Hales and Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury announced this week a \$30 million city and county commitment to support new affordable housing, shelter beds and eviction prevention.

The new investment will go to support "A Home For Everyone," a community partnership to end homelessness among the cities of Portland and Gresham, Multnomah County, Home Forward and Meyer Memorial Trust.

"Finding homes for families, children and anyone else sleeping on our streets is my top priority," said Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury. "The turbulent housing market is making that harder than it ever has been, and it is forcing

people out of their homes. This new investment shows that our entire community is committed to finding a solution to our housing crisis."

Officials say the money will go specifically to support new affordable housing for Multnomah County's most vulnerable residents, including people experiencing a mental health crisis, and funding for shelter beds for women and families.

"I don't believe we can solve Portland's homelessness or housing problems overnight," said Mayor Charlie Hales. "If we are to make any real progress, we must first recognize the true emergency this represents in thousands if not tens of thousands of lives in our community."

The county is committing \$10 million of the new investments, while the city is committing \$20 million.

New policies and the additional \$30 million investment will go to support the following:

#### Increase shelter options for our most vulnerable neighbors

- Suspend limitations on siting shelters, making life-saving places to sleep available quickly. The city and county say they will be able to fund the more than 650 needed shelter beds for women, children and people with disabilities.

#### Invest more in the work we are doing to end homelessness

- Fully fund the projected \$15 million we need to prevent more than 1,000 families from becoming homeless and to house more than 1,300 additional women, children, and people with disabilities currently in shelters or on the streets.

#### Improve protection for tenants

- Implement a proposal to increase notice for no-cause evictions and rent increases.
- Create a Tenant Protection Team at legal services to increase enforcement.

The Community Alliance of Tenants and others are currently calling for a moratorium or suspension of no-cause terminations for one year. The organization is also asking to increase the notice period of rent increases over 5

percent from the current 30 days to one year. Sources tell Street Roots it's more likely that the city will change the current 30-day no-cause eviction status to 90 days in Portland and advocate state legislatures to take a harder look at no-cause eviction terminations and rent control.

#### Build new affordable housing

- Allocate an additional \$10 million to build units that serve those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Put a special emphasis on permanent housing for people with severe mental illness who are homeless and accessing the soon-to-be-opened Unity Center.

The \$10 million for new investments in affordable housing would come on top of the \$5 million already allocated in the current budget cycle.

Last week, Hales announced a state of emergency on homelessness and housing. Street Roots argued that the plan wasn't up to scale and didn't provide the level of investment needed to address the problem in the short term.

"One of the reasons we are at this point to celebrate these new dollars and prioritize housing is because advocates and the community have come together and demanded action," said Kafoury.

Hales' office told Street Roots he is committed to funding \$20 million of the package of investments through all available mechanisms, including existing resources, new revenue and the upcoming budget process.

Asked at the press conference if a short-term rental tax was back on the table to support housing, Commissioner Dan Saltzman responded, "Yes, I now have three votes."

Other sources of new revenue to support housing could potentially come from increased allocations in urban renewal districts and a tax on demolitions.

We sure hope so. We've got a lot of work ahead of us.

The Welcome Home Coalition, made up of more than 100 community organizations, estimates that it will take a \$50 million annual investment, long-term, to help solve the problem.

At the end of the day, money isn't the only solution to the housing crisis in our community. In order to truly tackle the problem we need strong leadership in Salem to create regulatory actions on rent control, inclusionary zoning and evictions. It's going to take finding a permanent source of revenue, and ultimately it's going to take our regional leaders to step up to the plate with the same passion as leaders in Multnomah County. Ultimately, it's going to take a menu of options.

We are at a crossroads and as a community we must not let up on the gas. It's time to push our elected leaders to go above and beyond. It's time to go big on housing in our community.



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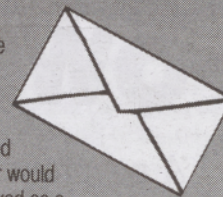
By Israel Bayer

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If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, [joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org). We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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