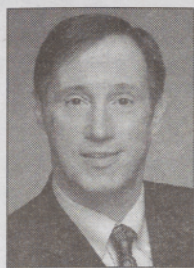


Our shared values are evident in our approach to housing



Dan Saltzman is the Portland city commissioner in charge of the Portland Housing Bureau

BY DAN SALTZMAN
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

I am not one to sugarcoat or gloss over the realities of what we have faced over the last several years in Portland. We have been weathering one of the most severe affordable-housing shortages in the country, marked by rapidly rising rents and home prices, housing instability and an economy still tilted unfairly against our most low-income and vulnerable residents, especially seniors on a fixed income and those with disabilities.

The second annual State of Housing in Portland report, presented to City Council last week, presents a frank appraisal of what we have seen in the housing market over the course of this past year. It is honest about what this market has done to displace longtime residents, particularly communities of color, from the central city and how nearly every corner of Portland is becoming increasingly unattainable for even modest-income families.

Certainly no one wants to hear "it could be worse," but I assure you it absolutely could be if City Council, the Portland Housing Bureau and advocates across the

ideological spectrum didn't do the hard work they did over the past year to push aggressive city and state policy to meet long-term affordable-housing goals. Despite disagreements and debate over the strategies and ways to move us out of the crisis, this community stepped up in a big way so our shared values are now enshrined into every aspect of growth this city will see in the future.

With the tireless advocacy from Street Roots and other organizations that make up the Welcome Home Coalition, voters overwhelmingly approved Portland's first-ever Affordable Housing Bond this November, providing over \$258 million available to build or preserve 1,300 affordable rental housing units over the next five to seven years. This money is already being put to work to purchase the Ellington Apartments, 263 garden-style townhomes in Northeast Portland, which – if approved – would prevent displacement and provide much-needed deeply affordable housing for Portland families.

Meanwhile, we successfully lobbied the state to lift its pre-emption on mandatory inclusionary zoning and have now fast-tracked inclusionary housing policy for

Portland so that economically diverse neighborhoods are forever a bedrock in all new development.

We also adopted a commercial and residential construction excise tax to fund affordable rental housing and homeownership programs so that growth pays for growth.

Over the past year, we have completed construction and opened nearly 400 new affordable rental units with 1,900 more in the pipeline, over 20 percent of which are dedicated to households earning less than 30 percent of the area median income.

And yet despite this progress – including the establishment of a new Joint Office for Homeless Services and a rapid expansion in the number of available shelter beds – there is little time to celebrate. There is too much work to do.

You can be sure that incoming Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly share this Council's dedication to expanding opportunities for all Portlanders, protecting vulnerable tenants, and building on the groundwork the city and the Portland Housing Bureau has laid out since emerging from the Great Recession.

You can read more on the city's State of Housing in Portland report at www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/67393

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