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Maxine Fitzpatrick is leading efforts to mitigate aspects of housing displacement and gentrification by pushing forward a plan to build and create 1,000 homes over the next 10 years.

On the Front Lines of a Housing Crisis

An innovative plan to undo displacement

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An innovative plan is underway to bring back some of the people displaced by a housing crisis in north and northeast Portland over the past couple of decades, especially for residents of color.

The Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, a 22-year-old community development corporation led by an African-American administrator, has put forward a "Pathway 1000" project to mitigate aspects of displacement and gentrification by building and creating 1,000 homes over the next 10 years.

Maxine Fitzpatrick, executive director of the non-profit and one of the project's biggest backers, found that during the 1990s and specifically in the first decade of the millennium, approximately 10,000 residents, most of them black, were forced to relocate from their historical neighborhoods.

Fitzpatrick knew that Portland was not the first or last city to see this kind of displacement as inner city neighborhoods have become popular to new residents, especially young college graduates and white urban professionals, but she wanted to create a project that would at least begin to mitigate some of the impact for residents who were left behind.

"There really isn't something else like it as far as I know," said Fitzpatrick when asked if the project had a precedent elsewhere. "San Francisco is just now, 60 years in, talking about displaced communities, and it falls short

of really mitigating situations that the local governments caused. We should do something now, not 60 years in."

And now is exactly when the project is starting. The 1,000 homes will be constructed at a level of 100 homes per year utilizing the organization's power to leverage its budget and community supporters, Fitzpatrick said. The first priority will be serving involuntarily displaced residents who were forced to relocate due to escalating housing costs or because their rental home was sold to a homeowner.

The organization will also focus on acquiring properties historically owned by African-American families in north and northeast Portland, hoping to preserve a legacy of homeownership by future generations of color in the same neighborhoods they have called home.

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