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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON JR./THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler (center) addresses issues of housing affordability, police reform and other topics during a visit to the offices of the Portland Observer. Welcoming the mayor are Portland Observer Publisher Mark Washington (right) and Editor Michael Leighton.

## City Matters Mayor up front on the issues

BY ZACHARY SENN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler pushed his agenda on the critical issues of housing affordability and police reforms during a visit to the offices of the Portland Observer, Oregon's longest serving minority publication Friday.

Wheeler, who assumed office in January, laid out his vision to make housing more accessible to lower income and minority communities by supporting workforce training programs and higher paying jobs; the construction of

affordable housing units; and fair housing practices. He also spoke of how he hopes to guide the Portland Police Bureau on new policies to fight bias in its procedures and practices and the overrepresentation of black and minority defendants in the criminal justice system.

Wheeler, who was elected in May of 2016, succeeded Charlie Hales as the mayor of Oregon's largest city. He previously served as Oregon State Treasurer and chair of the Multnomah County Commission.

Speaking to the critical lack of accessible housing in the Portland area, Wheeler said it was important for city officials to rethink how they are approaching issues of housing and affordability.

"The problem is that we're disconnecting housing from the reality of our economy," Wheeler said.

In order to make housing more accessible to disadvantaged communities, the mayor points to the city's new 2035 Comprehensive Plan to better link education and vocational programs to growing a workforce with incomes to sup-

port housing.

"The economic displacement is now being exacerbated by a lack of access to the educational and job training opportunities," Wheeler said. "It's a vicious circle at this point."

The mayor, who was a key proponent of newly elected City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's stopgap ordinance to make landlords pay tenant relocation expenses under certain circumstances, says that the city must begin thinking about how it can help to keep Portlanders economically competitive.

"If we can connect more people to the education and the job training they need so that they can latch on to those economic opportunities, they will be much more likely to be able to stay right here," Wheeler said.

The city's renter assistance policy, which was enacted in February, mandates that landlords pay the relocation expenses of their tenants in the case of a no-cause eviction or if the rent is raised by 10 percent or more. The payouts can range from

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