

# Losing Bid Upsets Immigrant Group

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

owned Colas Construction, Community Vision, and El Programa Hispano, called for 141 affordable units while the Related NW proposal called for 137 units, Dar said.

Ryan was not available for an interview on short notice last week, but his spokeswoman, Margaux Weeke, sent a lengthy email response from PHB director Shannon Callahan, to several questions, including, "Why did the city choose to award the bid to Related Companies?"

First, Callahan pointed out that the City Council did not play a role in the bid process, but that the Housing Bureau received five proposals for the new building. Proposals first went through an initial "two-step intensive review process," she wrote, including a technical and financial feasibility committee and a community review committee.

"The project selected through that process was proposed by a development team that includes IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization), Catholic Charities and Related NW," Callahan stated. "Out of the five project proposals received, the proposal submitted by REACH CDC in partnership with AYCO ranked third, based on the criteria and parameters set forth in the solicitation."

The selection of Related Northwest is

currently under review by Metro, she stated.

"Metro has shared with us that they have been clear with AYCO throughout the process of temporary leasing and community engagement that the project/developer selection process for the site would be a competitive one," Callahan wrote. "Ultimately, the proposal they were part of was not selected through the competitive process led by Portland Housing Bureau. We are sympathetic that this is a disappointment."

Regardless, Dar is not satisfied and said he has requested a meeting with Metro Council President Lynn Peterson to ask her about transparency the selection process. He said he expects to meet with her sometime this week.

Dar, a native of Somalia, started AYCO in 2008 as athletic mentorship program for six East African boys who were school dropouts. Through engaging them in sports, he was able to get them back in school and the organization has grown enormously since then.

Today, AYCO has a staff of 16 and programs for youth, families, health and disability, psychological-social services and rental assistance, and serves more than 20,000 community members each year, Dar said.

Many of AYCO's staff have similar backgrounds to the people they serve.

"We understand the language, we un-

derstand the culture, and we've also been in the school system so we know how to navigate in school," said Nuradin Abdurahman, who works in AYCO's Uplift program that helps middle, high school and college-bound students.

In a recent interview, Dar said AYCO is serving about 2,000 people a month and has invested "too much money in new equipment and supplies to simply walk away come next November."

According to the Portland Tribune, Metro spokesman Nick Christensen called AYCO "a wonderful partner" and hoped to collaborate with the nonprofit in the future.

"We are sympathetic that this is a disappointment and hope AYCO will be able to find a permanent home," Christensen said.

AYCO receives funding from the city, Metro, Oregon Community Foundation, the Collins Foundation, Oregon Department of Education, Nike Community Impact Fund, Oregon Department of Human Services, CareOregon, and more.

"We are trying to kind of bridge the gap when it comes to mental health and substance abuse, when it comes to domestic violence, when it comes to hate and Islamophobia," Dar said.

In terms of a new space, Dar says AYCO needs a center that includes a multi-use athletic space, offices, conference room, commercial kitchen, Head Start classroom, reception area and shared

workspace. He would like to have space in the new building or somewhere in the Montavilla neighborhood, where many East African immigrants live.

The organization's current one-story building at 432 N.E. 7th Ave. is owned by Metro and the Housing Bureau. It will be demolished ahead of a new \$56 million affordable housing project, including \$19.5 million from a 2018 regional housing bond.

According to a news release from the city, Related Northwest's plans call for constructing two buildings, one with 41 units of permanent supportive housing, supporting people of color, seniors, homeless persons and survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault.

The second building will have 96 units of family housing to target "BIPOC, seniors, immigrant and refugee households and intergenerational families." Catholic Charities will provide case management and the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization will provide resident services.

Planned amenities include a community room and kitchen, laundry room, playground, picnic area, community garden, bike parking, surface parking, and onsite multicultural preschool. The project team is also partnering with Mercy Corps NW to promote small business classes and offer two retail incubator spaces and a café in the ground-floor commercial space.

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