

## Prosper cont'd from pg 1

then we're going to get them homed and then we're going to get them placed into services and then we're going to scale down. My expectation is that we will restore (Prosper Portland's) funding on an ongoing basis next year."

But Prosper Portland, its partners and supporters argue that such a

**“We see it as working alongside council**

move would be counterproductive to the city's mission of inclusive economic development. The agency's citywide programming includes the Inclusive Business Resource Network, the Neighborhood Prosperity Network, the Office of Film and Events, My People's Market and the new Office of Small Business. Prosper Portland also offers workforce development programs, technical and financial assistance for small businesses and initiatives to attract employers who pay livable wages.

"If we are outside of ongoing funds, we automatically are not a part of the formula that the city budget office would build for next year," Chabre Vickers, director of equity, policy and communications for Prosper Portland, told *The Skanner*. "So our team now needs to also look at, how can we reasonably work with a staff who don't know if they're going to have a job or not? It throws everything into disarray.

"Not to mention, we have multi-year partnerships with folks like in our inclusive business resource network,

and we fund direct jobs across dozens of partners that come from these dollars, so they too are wondering. These are staffers that are embedded across the community that wonder if they have a job."

### Deep Cuts

The first cohort of the new city council has an unenviable task in refining Mayor Keith Wilson's \$8.5 billion budget proposal, which addresses a general fund gap that could be as much as \$100 million. Inflation and a persistent housing crisis have strained the city's resources, and Wilson's proposals included cutting 180 positions in permitting and parks and recreation.

Dunphy and Green's proposed amendment would end the city's ongoing general fund allocation to Prosper Portland, which would amount to about \$11 million in the coming year. Prosper Portland said that this change, alongside another \$3.7 million in funding changes from the city, would mean a \$14.7 million cut to their organization.

"My amendment is about asking Prosper Portland to use their savings to this year help us bridge a gap so that we don't have to cut parks maintenance and we don't have to cut permit issuance," Dunphy told *The Skanner*. "I'm really worried about the permitting bureau. If the economic development agency is wildly successful, we will not have anybody in the permitting bureau to go and issue the permits for those new businesses or those new apartments or whatever it's going to be, because of the scale of these



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## Plans for Vancouver

On Monday, April 21, Vancouver City Council adopted the City's first-ever, Five-Year Economic Development Strategy. In alignment with the City's core values of sustainability and resiliency, and livability, the inclusive strategy is designed to help support economic growth and address growing disparities within the community, and is organized around four primary goals: Establish pathways to accessible quality jobs, create opportunities for intergenerational wealth, position Vancouver as an inclusive center of innovation and entrepreneurship, and invest in neighborhood commercial districts.

cuts."

Prosper Portland has pushed back, arguing that business licenses contribute about \$220 million to the general fund and that under Dunphy and Green's proposed amendment, none of that money would fund support for small businesses.

Prosper Portland also took issue with Dunphy's characterization of their strategic investment fund (SIF) as a simple savings account or, as Dunphy has referred to it on social media, a "slush fund."

"Even if we put some SIF dollars there, the SIF corpus would be depleted as the year goes by," Vickers said in response to Dunphy's suggestion. "You take ongoing (financing) and replace it with one-time, and every year it continues to go down and you lose not

only staff capacity and expertise, but these other programs that they're saying are going to happen in different places – we just don't know how they'd work that out."

### TIF And SIF

Prosper Portland oversees tax increment financing (TIF) districts throughout the city – neighborhoods that may suffer from deteriorating facilities and lagging resources. Through this process, the agency oversees upgrades to parks, streets and community areas and centers.

TIF funds can only be used within such districts. Vickers explained that a strategic investment fund (SIF) has allowed Prosper Portland to serve the 85% of the city not in a TIF district.

"Our SIF fund goes even further than that

because it allows us to make loans through our community that also allow them to purchase and acquire real estate," she said. "So for us it really is about how we ensure that folks can get access to the market, that we can ensure that we're utilizing all of our tools in both a responsible way and a way that I feel like is reflective of community request, and responsive to council request as well."

In a letter to the city council, Prosper Portland board chair Gustavo Cruz and interim executive director Shea Flaherty Betin warned that cutting the \$11 million general fund allocation from their agency's budget, and asking them to make up the difference from their SIF, would mean a loss of 19 small business and commercial property loans they

would normally be able to offer within the city. If the city were to decline providing general fund allocations in the future, Cruz and Flaherty Betin said the SIF would be fully spent within three years.

Dunphy had a different view.

"Those are tax dollars that should have been invested in those communities," Dunphy told *The Skanner*. "It wasn't meant to be used to continue the process of what Prosper has been doing, which is deeply unaccountable."

Tony Barnes, chief financial officer at Prosper Portland, told *The Skanner* the SIF was funded by repayments on loans that had been given in TIFs.

"The concept of building this TIF is that over

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the warning signs of gaslighting in Oregon Senate Bill 702, a proposal to ban flavored tobacco and menthol.

"Anything that's banned becomes contraband, anything that is contraband is illegal, and anything illegal is a police and law enforcement issue—period," stated NY State Police Sr. Investigator Elliot Boyce.

The panelists also reiterated the need to address the root causes of addiction and to understand the underlying criminal and economic realities of the proposed flavored tobacco and menthol ban, especially in marginalized communities.

Sherman Lea, Jr., NABCJ President: "We travel around the country to have conversations - asking hard questions - about the impact of local, state, and federal policy issues. We hope to continue to be a resource for Oregon law enforcement-related questions and concerns."

## Reparations cont'd from pg 1

have been well documented. And if anyone reads the recommendations of past reports, one would see that this governor has been silently focused on resolving these inequities." Over the last 25 years, Moore emphasized, five reparations-related studies were conducted, including the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the State Commission to Coordinate the Study, Commemoration, and Impact of the History and Legacy of Slavery in Maryland. Moore's firm "no" emphasizes that it's time for "action," not another study.

On Friday, Maryland's first Black governor spoke extensively about his veto

decision at the NAACP national board meeting in Baltimore City, where the organization is headquartered. Sources close to the meeting say the governor was "clear" in his explanation. In Washington, D.C., reparations also dominated conversations last Thursday on Capitol Hill. Democrats reintroduced the idea of reparations with a resolution that offers trillions of federal dollars in reparations to Black Americans to repair the damage of the enslavement of Africans in America for 250 years, followed by Jim Crow and the ongoing effects of other federally supported discriminatory policies. Historically, there have been

instances of reparations in this country—such as for Japanese Americans in-

**“\$38 million was awarded**

terned during World War II. \$38 million was awarded in total, with each victim receiving a \$20,000 payout. However, Black Americans have not received anything comparable for the enslavement of Africans in America, during which enslavers profited off free labor.

In 2021, Evanston, Illinois, created a reparations plan for its Black residents. Additionally, Georgetown University created a new fund that awards \$400,000 annually to community-based

projects benefiting the descendants of the men, women, and children enslaved on Jesuit plantations in Maryland. A senior White House official said that when it comes to reparations, President Trump "is creating an economy that's gonna work for all Americans. And if the Democrats really want to uplift the Black community, they would support the President's One Big, Beautiful bill that would bring about record tax cuts to this economy, which would benefit Black Americans." The President's bill would remove undocumented immigrants from Medicaid, give Social Security recipients a reprieve, and eliminate taxes on overtime pay and tips.