



City of  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**  
Development Review Advisory Committee



January 26, 2023

Portland City Council  
1221 SW Fourth Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

Re: The Bureau of Development Services' FY 2023-24 Requested Budget

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners,

As the members of the City's **Development Review Advisory Committee (DRAC)**, we are writing to express our support for the Bureau of Development Services' (BDS's) Requested Budget for fiscal year (FY) 2023-24. DRAC members represent significant design, construction, and neighborhood stakeholders and associations with interest in the outcome of policies, budgets, regulations, and procedures that affect development review processes in the City of Portland.

The DRAC regularly reviews BDS's strategic direction, financial status, and priorities, and advises the bureau regarding annual budget decisions. We have also consistently communicated with BDS managers and staff regarding our priorities for the bureau and the development review process:

- Provide timely, quality services to all customers
- Work with partner bureaus to streamline and improve development review processes
- Keep fees as low as possible while maintaining service levels and supporting program goals
- Secure sufficient ongoing General Fund support, particularly for programs that provide community-wide benefit

BDS engaged the DRAC in this year's budget and financial planning process through participation on the BDS Budget Advisory Committee and Financial Advisory Committee, and through regular updates at our monthly DRAC meetings.

After reviewing and discussing BDS's financial status, programs and services, and priorities, we want to express our support for the bureau's Requested Budget and also specifically identify priority areas important to the DRAC.

**Support for the recommendations of the BDS Budget Advisory Committee (BAC)**

The DRAC was represented on the BDS BAC and supports the recommendations brought forward by that committee. While the BAC is proposing a broader list of recommendations, the DRAC advocates more specifically for the following:

1. **Equity.** BDS's budget should reflect a commitment to prioritize people and communities most affected by the devastating economic and social health impacts of the pandemic, such as small businesses, especially those owned by people of color.
2. **Website Accessibility.** The City's Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR) has the following program areas: Equity and Language Access, ADA Title II and Disability Equity, Digital Accessibility, and Disability Equity. BDS should use the budget process to propose a budget note or proviso that prioritizes BDS website accessibility and language access in the coming year. BDS should also pursue other ways to prioritize their needs in this area.
3. **Permit Navigation.** Rather than relying *solely* on a potential new hire, BDS should use its community engagement resources to build the capacity of small community-centered business programs to offer BDS permit navigation in their suite of services. For example, the Small Business Hub and community partners that support Prosper Portland programs.
4. **Small Business.** The DRAC supports continued funding for the Small Business Empowerment Program to help small business BIPOC and disabled people navigate the permitting system. However, given the constraints on the City General Fund spending, the DRAC recommends that BDS explore funding such a position with fee revenue. Similarly, the DRAC advocates for a single point of contact approach to permitting. Regardless of funding that such a new position, the DRAC recommends BDS builds on the successful collaboration with permit improvement to jointly fund a permit navigator.
5. **Data-Driven Decision Making.** The BDS community engagement and data management team should make greater and more strategic use of demographics, spatial, and program data to linking BDS services to address the needs of specific communities. BDS should produce performance metrics to identify investment opportunities to meet community outcomes and ensure that BDS makes progress in achieving those outcomes. BDS could also increase collaboration with the equity analysis and data teams in the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Office of Equity and Human Rights to refine reporting metrics and program design.

### **Dedication of ongoing resources for the Neighborhood Inspections Program**

The BDS Neighborhood Inspections Program supports some of the most vulnerable members of our community with the goal of seeing property owners voluntarily reach compliance with City Codes. The program addresses the persistent inequities related to the health and safety of renters and property owners, anti-displacement of Portland residents, preserving neighborhoods and maintaining housing supply. When successful, BDS earns less revenue from fines and penalties and is therefore unable to achieve cost recovery. In this instance, however, investments to help sustain the City's commitment to equitable outcomes should outweigh cost recovery. The DRAC would like to make a special appeal to City Council to reinstate and maintain the level of ongoing General Fund support necessary to provide the resources required until the program successfully eliminates these inequities, without reliance on the assessment of fines and penalties.

### **Revitalizing downtown Portland and the Central Eastside**

The revitalization of the downtown Portland and Central Eastside areas is pivotal to the economic future of the city. It is necessary to attract investment, people, and business to Portland and help make the city a vibrant place to live, work, and visit. The DRAC urges the City Council and BDS to review the regulatory obstacles prohibiting the revitalization of these areas and to remove those obstacles when appropriate. Since regulations cross bureau boundaries, this will take a multi-bureau effort as well as action from City Council.

Over the last several years, the DRAC has consistently advocated for sufficient General Fund monies to support BDS programs and services. This year, the DRAC is aware of the direction from the Mayor on the budget process as well as the limited amount of ongoing General Fund resources available. Given these constraints, we understand General Fund resources are scarce and we urge BDS to engage with other City bureaus on opportunities for collaboration and leveraging existing relationships wherever possible to meet their needs, without the allocation of additional funding.

The DRAC therefore respectfully requests that you approve BDS's FY 2023-24 Requested Budget.

Sincerely,

Paul Delsman, DRAC Chair

**Development Review Advisory Committee Members**

| <b>DRAC Member</b>  | <b>Representing</b>   | <b>Affiliation</b>             |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Jill Cropp          | Home Builders   | Studio Cropp Architecture      |
| Bobby Daniels       | Design Professionals  | Wenaha Group                   |
| Libby Deal          | Neighborhood Coalition Land Use Committees                    | King Neighborhood Association  |
| Paul Delsman        | Large Construction Contractors                                | Howard S. Wright               |
| Elizabeth Gomez     | Home Remodelers   | Bridge City Contracting        |
| Steffeni Gray       | Environmental Conservation & Green Building                   | All Hands Raised               |
| Sean Green          | Citywide Neighborhood Interests                               | NE Coalition of Neighborhoods  |
| Holloway Huntley    | Frequent Development Review Customers                         | Environs LLC                   |
| Lauren Golden Jones | Large Developers  | Capstone Partners              |
| Steve Lee           | Land Use Planning Professionals                               | Public Sector Urban Planner    |
| Samuel Miller       | Small Businesses  | N/NE Business Association      |
| Peggy Moretti       | Historic Preservation   | Historic Preservation          |
| Eric Paine          | Low-Income Housing Developers                                 | Community Development Partners |
| Maurice Rahming     | Minority Construction Contractors & Development Professionals | O'Neill Construction Group     |
| Jennifer Santhouse  | Major Facilities Landowners                                   | Portland General Electric      |
| Eli Spevak          | Planning & Sustainability Commission                          | Orange Splot, LLC              |
| Martha Williamson   | Public Works Permit Customers                                 | Vega Civil Engineering, LLC    |