



**DATE:** May 10, 2017  
**TO:** Board of Commissioners  
**FROM:** Kimberly Branam, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Report Number 17-16  
Adopting the Portland Development Commission Communications Strategy

### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED**

Adopt Resolution No. 7232

### **ACTION DESCRIPTION**

This action by the Portland Development Commission (PDC) Board of Commissioners (Board) will adopt the PDC Communications Strategy (Communications Strategy), including formally adopting a new name for the agency that more accurately reflects our core work and mission. In addition to identifying a new name, the Communications Strategy recommends a new agency tagline, logo, key messages, and implementation plan. At the May 10, 2017 PDC Board meeting, staff will present the proposed new name for the PDC Board's consideration, discussing the rationale for the change, and implications for how the agency does its work moving forward.

### **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

PDC was created in 1958 by City of Portland voters as the Development and Civic Promotion Department to help Portland take advantage of the powerful economic tools allowed by urban renewal authority. Its charter called for it to be administered by a Portland Development Commission as the city's urban renewal and redevelopment agency. PDC has played a critical role, through its investments and projects, in the city's covetable reputation for smart urban development and quality of life.

PDC was created "to address economic disinvestment in communities by providing targeted funds for infrastructure, public spaces, and the renovation or construction of buildings to meet the economic, housing, and social needs of the community, and to sustain or increase the base of property values." Over the last 59 years, PDC has managed 25 urban renewal areas and/or programs, including six micro-urban renewal areas, and provided funding for hundreds of projects across the city. The process to create the redevelopment areas, the economic impact, and the gains from the investments have varied widely in inclusiveness in that period – and outcomes have ranged from great triumphs to neighborhood destruction.

According to Craig Wollner, John Provo, and Julie Schablisky in *Brief History of Urban Renewal in Portland, Oregon*, "The history of urban renewal in Portland is distinguished by three phases of development. The first period ran roughly from 1958 to the late sixties. It was an era of grand projects, projects that were often undertaken with an urgency suggesting the crises of larger, more racially divided cities. The second lasted from the late sixties to the end of the 80s and focused urban renewal efforts on the preservation of Portland's neighborhoods and a vital downtown. The third and current

phase, which began in the late 80s and early 90s, is characterized by its entrepreneurial spirit, its insistence on citizen involvement, and its adherence to the values of evolving what might be called “post-modern urban planning theory.”

A key part of that history are the discriminatory practices that destabilized communities of color and people who were not land owners – especially in the first two phases from 1958 through the 1980s, exemplified in the Albina neighborhood. Prompted by voter approval of construction of the Memorial Coliseum, more than 450 homes and businesses were removed. Federal approval of highway construction funds building the Interstate 5 freeway directly through Albina led to the further destruction of more than 1,000 homes. At the time, four out of five people in this community were African American, many of them former Vanport residents. Because redlining policies were still in effect, the displaced families had nowhere else to go.

By 1973, another 400 homes and businesses disappeared from the area, driven out by Emanuel Hospital’s campus expansion development plan and a PDC report recommending land clearance to make way for the project. By the 1980s, after years of systematic disinvestment and neglect, most neighborhoods in North and Northeast Portland were in bad shape. With most of the population low-income and the homes and businesses located close to the city center, the conditions were ripe for gentrification. Despite the creation of The Albina Plan and the subsequent adoption of the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area to target city investment, residents felt disconnected from the positive changes taking place.

Meanwhile, millions of dollars went out to architects, planners, contractors, and construction companies for major projects, with very little of it going to minority-owned businesses. Neighborhood residents and businesses were not benefiting from the investment. The community’s painful memories of homes being bulldozed, families being displaced, and businesses lost proved to be a lasting challenge.

Faced with mistrust and accusations of exclusion and dishonesty, PDC leadership recognized the need for true change and started to review their approach to policies related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2007 PDC adopted the Business & Workforce Equity Policy to ensure construction and contracting investments provided equitable opportunities for contractors and workers.

In the face of the worst economic downturn in 60 years, in 2009, the PDC Board and City Council adopted the Five-Year Economic Development Strategy, noting that continued emphasis on investments in transit, infrastructure, housing, and social service at the expense of economic development would not grow the local economy, and that achieving prosperity for all residents would require explicit investments in retaining and growing businesses, training workers, funding innovation, and developing catalytic projects to realize such benefits.

In 2011, the PDC Board and City Council adopted the Neighborhood Economic Development (NED) Strategy and began explicitly to ask “who benefits?” The use of an equity lens became an essential tool in developing plans, programs, and projects to promote neighborhood vitality and business success. The NED Strategy also incorporated a different approach to partnership, employing the community-led, community-driven model demonstrated by the formation of the Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative districts.

In 2013, the PDC Board approved a new Equity Policy, which called for an increase in equitable outcomes and for staff to consider “who benefits?” in every project. This led to formation of the internal Equity Council and our work with CrossRoads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training, which focuses on institutional racism and how PDC can work towards racial justice as an organization.

By 2014, the fifth and final year of the Economic Development Strategy, Multnomah County employment had grown by 15,000 jobs, Portland’s recession recovery was ranked 17 among 100 largest

U.S. metropolitan areas, and PDC had made significant gains in supporting small business, building community capacity, and prioritizing equity.

But while Portland continues to compete and thrive in the global economy, the city faces serious challenges that undermine Portlanders' ability to participate in the gains from economic growth. Among those challenges are insufficient job growth to meet the needs of the city's growing population; the consequences of a long history of explicit institutional racism, including wide disparities in employment, income, and wealth between white communities and communities of color in Multnomah County; and lack of affordability in close-in neighborhoods, resulting in gentrification, displacement, and concentrations of poverty in North, Northeast, and increasingly, East Portland.

Propelled by the growing disparity between those who have benefited from economic growth and the diverse communities who have not, the PDC Board adopted the PDC 2015-2020 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) in May 2015, setting a course for the agency for the next five years. The Strategic Plan represents a new model, where the gains from physical and economic growth are intentionally focused to address growing gaps within our city and to ensure that all communities realize equitable benefits.

The Strategic Plan identifies the following goals and ambitions: to more deeply integrate PDC's job creation, placemaking, and economic opportunity work to realize benefits for all Portlanders, especially communities of color and those historically underserved, and to do so through a focus on healthy, complete neighborhoods, access to employment, equitable wealth creation, and civic networks, institutions and partnerships.

In support of the Strategic Plan, PDC initiated the development of a Communications Strategy in October 2016 to significantly increase awareness and support for PDC, its Strategic Plan, and related projects, programs, and initiatives. The Communications Strategy objectives are to ensure that PDC's communication and engagement approaches are aligned and effective and to provide a framework for a new, more consistent way to talk about the agency's work and explain its strategic direction in a manner that resonates more clearly with the community.

### **COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC BENEFIT**

A new name will more accurately reflect the work that has been under way since the Strategic Plan was adopted in 2015. Its accompanying tagline and key messages will better explain and simplify the new strategic direction in resident-friendly ways. A change in branding and presentation also aligns with the change in how we do our work – being more transparent, showing a more human face, elevating social equity as paramount in all that we do, and focusing on outcomes and measurable impacts. To that end, staff is taking steps to analyze and evaluate our efforts and articulate outcomes in a consistent, compelling, timely, and quantifiable way.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK**

Working with a consultant team with expertise in communications, polling, branding, and messaging, staff conducted an extensive research phase to understand how PDC is perceived by the diverse communities with whom we work on a regular basis. This research included in-person and online interviews with 60 key stakeholders and conversations with partners and staff. In addition, the team held three focus group meetings (two with local residents of color and one with local business owners of color) and conducted a city-wide phone survey of 400 Portlanders.

The feedback from this outreach made it clear that, while PDC is viewed as the best agency to work to improve Portland's economy, a change in communications approach is required to enhance connections with our diverse stakeholder groups and raise awareness of our ongoing work.

At the PDC Board of Commissioners retreat in December 2016, staff presented preliminary research results, including a summary of key findings and recommendations on how to better communicate and engage the public in the context of PDC's Strategic Plan and future. The consultant team doubled back to stakeholders and residents to reconfirm those findings and review the proposed actions to be included in the Communications Strategy.

Staff presented the Communications Strategy and proposed new names for the agency to the Neighborhood Economic Development Leadership Group and Central City Budget Advisory Committee in March 2016. Feedback from these groups led staff to change the new tagline to more accurately reflect PDC's work and mission.

### **BUDGET AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

There are sufficient funds in the fiscal year (FY) 2016/17 and proposed 2017/18 budgets for work related to this proposed action, including production of new collateral such as envelopes, business cards, and signage estimated to cost \$10,000.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

There is low to moderate risk in rebranding the agency, since taking action will bring the agency's mission and communications into alignment. Following are some of the risks of the name change and how staff can mitigate those risks:

- A failure to live into the values of the name change and an accompanying perception that it is just window dressing. This risk can be mitigated by actually changing how we do our work, exemplified in part by a more accessible and equity-focused website and messaging and outcomes-based evaluation and reporting;
- Confusion about why PDC is making this change. This risk can be mitigated by a clear and deliberate outreach strategy that includes mainstream and minority media, elected officials, prior PDC Board members, bureau partners, and other key stakeholders; and
- Lack of staff support. This risk can be mitigated by providing training opportunities on engagement approaches and strategic direction for all staff, website training, and one-on-one assistance, particularly for staff members who interact regularly with the community.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS**

The PDC Board could choose not to adopt the Communications Strategy and keep the existing agency name.