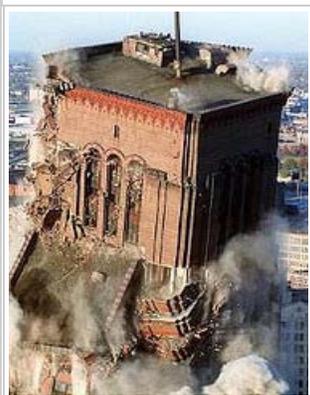


Mayor-elect Sam Adams Blows Up PDC — And Why Nick Fish Is All Smiles About It

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The systematic dismantling of the city-owned Portland Development Commission took a major leap forward today.

In perhaps the most consequential decision from his [reorganization](#) of the City that Works, Mayor-elect **Sam Adams** took away the Portland Development Commission's responsibilities for housing.

And as a result, now gone are 42 of the agency's 209 employees (about 20 percent of the staff) and 30 percent of PDC's largest source of funding—urban renewal or tax increment financing funds. (In fiscal year 2007-2008 PDC got \$187 million of its \$316 million budget — more than half — from urban renewal funds).

Over the past couple of years, city commissioners — principally Adams, Randy Leonard and the since-resigned Erik Sten — [took aim](#) at PDC, which has its own budget, mayorally-appointed board and executive director.

Those commissioners felt the city-owned PDC had become too independent of the City Council, which is ultimately responsible for agency actions.

In 2006, the council took an action that severely hamstrung the agency's free-wheeling culture: it passed a resolution dedicating 30 percent of urban renewal dollars to [affordable housing](#). Then in 2007, the council referred a measure to city voters proposing to give council far greater control over PDC's budget. Voters approved that measure by a wide margin.

Now comes today's announcement from Adams, part of a larger package of bureau assignments that are the mayor's greatest prerogative in Portland's City Hall set-up.

In shifting housing out of PDC's portfolio, Adams has reduced how many entities are involved in housing (Multnomah County and the Housing Association of Portland are also in the game). And he's allowed Housing Commissioner **Nick Fish** to both expand his responsibilities and funding, and make good on his campaign pledge to help consolidate the various agencies.

Four or five community development staffers may move from Fish's Housing Bureau to PDC in the re-org, although even that is in doubt as PDC outsourced its workforce development function years ago. And don't look for much of a headcount reduction as the two city bureaucracies merge; most of the PDC housing staff are part of a newly established union and have protection.

But Fish now has a dedicated source of funding for his bureau and one less group to negotiate with when trying to expand the city's stock of affordable housing.

"I think Mayor-elect Adams has created two powerhouse entities—one, PDC, that is more clearly focused on economic development; and one that can concentrate all the city's housing efforts," Fish says.

The move is likely to be less popular with PDC supporters, such as former Mayor Vera Katz, who opposed the May 2007 ballot measure stripping the agency's budget independence and the group of former PDC officials who are [challenging](#) other recent council encroachments on PDC turf.

(Photo courtesy Los Angeles Times) 

