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Executive Search

Portland Development Commission

Executive Position Profile

Position: Executive Director
Reports to: Chairman of Commission
Location: Portland, Oregon

The Organization

The Portland Development Commission (PDC), the urban renewal and economic development agency of Portland, Oregon, is uniquely structured to achieve city priorities pertaining to economic development, housing, job retention and creation, and revitalization activities. This semi-autonomous agency benefits from Portland's rich history of public/private collaboration while bringing together public and private community resources to provide sustained livability. Created in 1958 by Portland voters, this complex, multifaceted organization is led by an Executive Director who is accountable to a five member Commission, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council.

The PDC's success depends on close working relationships with the Commission, the Mayor's office, business partners, and numerous neighborhood, city, state and federal entities. In its effort to meet the Metro Region 2040 Plan—the long-range outline for what the region will look like from now until the year 2040—PDC is engaged in an aggressive development/ redevelopment effort. Currently financed by tax-increment financing tools, it presently manages ten urban renewal areas as well as citywide business development and housing programs. All of this is managed under a \$240 million annual budget and an operational staff of 140.

The Commission is a project-oriented organization where planning and decision-making occur with input from stakeholders at every level. While the product (be it as vast as an urban renewal plan or as complex as recruiting a company) is paramount, an inclusive process to deliver the product is equally as important. The Mayor and council create the vision, PDC then partners with business and the public to create the strategy and ultimately implement the plan. Thus, outreach occurs on several fronts simultaneously to ensure that PDC has balanced input from a wide variety of stakeholders. By sincerely involving all affected parties, PDC has developed a strong reputation for developing and implementing projects and programs that truly capture the essence of Portland, the aesthetic of a city rich in natural resources and beauty with vibrant multi-cultural institutions, a strong economy, and an engaged citizenry.

While PDC's accomplishments are evidenced throughout the city, a new Executive Director will face ongoing challenges. Key among them is communicating the organization's mission, vision and values to diverse audiences and interests. It's important for PDC to partner with many groups to remain effective, and all of those interests require different levels of information and management. Additionally, these various constituents need to have an understanding of the core vision and mission of PDC so that proper use of PDC's many tools is perpetuated.

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As the Commission nears its 50th anniversary, it will be addressing fundamental questions about its mission and focus for the future. Among these will be a comprehensive effort to define which priorities require sustained attention, what new funding sources will be available, and how and what services will be delivered. Also, since the organization is working with a new mayor and city council, it will need to be responsive to evolving political realities and increased focus on transparency.

Internally, PDC has administrative and managerial challenges due to the complex nature of the organization. With extensive project commitments that stretch PDC's resources, it engages in highly sophisticated dealings in arenas such as finance, planning & development, electoral politics, community outreach, etc. It employs a diverse workforce that requires a skilled manager to demonstrate leadership, particularly as the need to redirect resources and increase operating efficiencies becomes ever more important. PDC needs a mature leader who exhibits good judgment and well-honed communication abilities to be effective.

The visible impact of PDC on the landscape of the community, from job creation to parks, from low-income housing to the layout of the Rose Quarter, from the rebirth of MLK Parkway to the Pearl District, shows the great promise for activities to come. It is a treasured resource in the Rose City, aptly tagged "the city that works." This agency will continue to determine and create the look and feel of Portland and partner to expand housing and job creation, ensuring and expanding the "livability" that is so valued among Oregonians.

The Opportunity

PDC seeks a seasoned leader and manager to guide the agency and inspire its broad constituency. PDC's ambitious commitments require an Executive Director who is outcomes oriented, builds trust-based partnerships, and fosters coalitions around ideas. S/he must operate in the milieu of the public environment while forging partnerships with communities, advocacy groups, planners, developers, elected officials, staff, and the others who desire input regarding our city's evolution. This requires an excellent manager, administrator, communicator, visionary, and lover of the city's aesthetic. This visible position impacts the entire city's success in the key economic development areas of jobs and housing to say nothing of its impact on the overall physical development and redevelopment of Portland's infrastructure.

The Position

Responding to policies put forth by the City, the Executive Director works with Commissioners to develop direction for the operation of the PDC that reflects community values and priorities. S/he represents the agency as a member of the Mayor's portfolio, with City Council members, and with public, community and business organizations. S/he must provide an effective and efficient organization, which includes overseeing the development of business strategies and implementing organizational policies. Finally, the Executive Director sets and leads the direction of external relationships with key city, regional, state, and federal entities.

Specific responsibilities include the following:

- Directs Commission staff to plan, recommend and implement revitalization, housing and economic development programs for the city.
- Communicates regularly with Commissioners to provide status reports on organizational issues, to secure necessary approval of actions taken or to be taken, and make recommendations on policy matters.

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- Communicates regularly with the Mayor and City Council members to assure that appropriate information is provided about PDC matters of Council interest and requiring Council approval.
- Provides organizational excellence and responsiveness to stakeholders and customers. Leads implementation of business strategies. This includes leading senior management staff and approving staffing, affirmative hiring practices, and budget resources.
- Leads agency efforts to involve the public and business and community organizations in the organization's programs. Must strengthen and expand the region's strong network of existing and emerging businesses and entrepreneurs (including minority and low income).
- Represents the agency with the media.
- Establishes and maintains relationships with city, metro, state and federal agencies regarding Commission programs and projects. Works with state legislative and congressional delegation regarding laws and regulations that impact Commission activities.
- Organizes and reviews operational plans, administrative policy, and organizational procedures.

Required Qualifications

The successful candidate must have demonstrated leadership abilities, strong management skills supported by measurable outcomes, and political and business acumen. S/he will have worked with a Board at the senior level, managed a sizable staff using world class management principles, and partnered with elected officials as well as diverse community interests (e.g. neighborhood groups, business leaders, advocacy groups, etc.). Establishing and maintaining collaborative partnerships with all of the above groups requires superior communication, public speaking, and negotiation skills. Personal characteristics such as excellent judgment, high integrity, principled decision-making, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a commitment to diversity are necessary.

Significant experience in development, redevelopment, housing, and/or urban renewal management is necessary. A background that includes experience and/or education in finance, development, public management, business or equivalent disciplines would be helpful. Additionally, a background that demonstrates community focus and an appreciation for the city will be expected. Compensation will be commensurate with experience and includes an excellent benefit package.

For additional information, please contact:

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