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# POIC launches pre-apprenticeship program to train young workers, improve diversity

A lot has changed at the Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center since it was established in North Portland in 1968. The non-profit organization has expanded from one location to eight and reaches a broader demographic of people. In addition, it originally served only adults but now supports more than 1,000 teenagers and young adults each year.

Its mission remains the same, however. POIC is committed to the future success of at-risk youth through the age of 25, providing the highest quality services in education, mentoring, family outreach, employment training and placement. It reconnects alienated, at-risk youth affected by poverty, family instability and homelessness with high school education through Rosemary Anderson High School. It also supports work trainees through Rosemary Anderson Transitions and Work Opportunities Training.

Lanya McClintock, POIC's director of employment and training, said the organization's new pre-apprenticeship program is another means of providing training and placement in career sectors. Initiated in April, the program is housed at the Northwest College of Construction, where nine trainees are learning about the basics of construction. They have already completed a buildout of walls in POIC's offices and in mid-June were building a garden shed for Davis Elementary School in Rockwood.

Plans for the program



*Construction pre-apprentice students participate in an educational session at the Northwest College of Construction, which hosts the Work Opportunity Training program. (Josh Kulla photo/courtesy of DJC Oregon)*

gained momentum as POIC President and CEO Joe McFerrin II traveled around the country and heard repeated conversations about the need for more skilled workers and greater diversity within the trades. In collaboration with NAMC-Oregon, POIC formed an advisory council to help develop the program and obtain funding from Worksystems Inc. POIC also has received funding from the Oregon Department of Education's Youth Development Council to support the trainees' success.

The Northwest College of Construction's donation of space for the program is significant, as is the support POIC receives from local business owners. Opportunities to help out include financial contributions and donations

of tools and supplies. Site visits to local projects — ranging from residential remodels to large commercial and public construction projects — also are beneficial.

"Those kinds of experiences have been really great because it helps to inform them when they think about what path they want to take," McClintock said.

In addition, the students and trainees learn a great deal when people from different pathways to the industry share their experiences.

"Industry expertise is always good. It helps the students and trainees understand the lay of the land with construction and the trades because they are new to the arena, and it helps us know how we can leverage our resources and improve our program," she said.



*Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center instructor Torre Sathrum, a former general contractor, leads pre-apprentice students through a lesson in laminates at the Northwest College of Construction. (Josh Kulla photo/courtesy of DJC Oregon)*

# Virtual reality, augmented reality play increasingly key roles in AEC sectors

Herb Yamamoto recently spoke with NAMC-Oregon about the future of the architecture, engineering and construction industries, and some of it may involve 3D goggles and the ability to walk through a project site without physically setting foot near it.

Yamamoto, founder and CEO of BIM Connection, said virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are increasingly benefiting building owners and their project teams in several ways. VR allows the owner and AEC partners to visualize a design concept, particularly from an architectural perspective.

“In some projects, you can literally walk through the foyer or other key areas of a building with the key project stakeholders and have a real 3D experience!” he said.

Yamamoto pointed to examples he has recently seen, including a hospital that used the technology to virtually review the overall design and include a glass-walled meeting space that was soundproof so the care staff did not disturb patients at night, while still maintaining a line of sight of the patient areas through the glass walls.

Another example involved a project team that was working on a prison project. “The team was able to visually walk through a 3D



**“In some projects, you can literally walk through the foyer or other key areas of a building with the key project stakeholders and have a real 3D experience.”**

HERB YAMAMOTO  
founder and CEO of BIM Connection

model and pick up on certain blind spots that would not be apparent with a 2D drawing or typical 3D model,” he said, adding the technology is more accessible than before.

“I think it’s become more affordable and accessible because major and niche BIM software providers are making these solutions available in the cloud so you can load your 3D design and construction models, and then walk through them,” Yamamoto said.

He said AR is more closely related to the work he does with mechanical and plumbing systems. Similar to VR, one can wear AR goggles to see a holographic image overlaid over the actual installation site. As an example, AR can show what an HVAC duct system will look like before it is hung or where plumbing systems would be installed on a job site. Then

it can be used as a quality check.

“From a building owner’s perspective, I believe this will be very useful because it will give the facility and maintenance teams the ability to visualize the intended installation, and make any revisions before installation,” Yamamoto said, adding the technology can help improve collaboration between design teams and maintenance teams.

He pointed out that as the goggle technology continues to advance, it will be refined to be able to pinpoint locations where a field crew needs to, for example, install hangers or create sleeve locations.

BIM Connection, established in 2006, is a division of CADD Connection LLC and is an innovator of BIM and 3D modeling solutions.

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# Portland Clean Energy Fund: Initiative to benefit women, communities of color

Jo Ann Hardesty has seen plenty of initiatives intended to benefit women and communities of color fail to do so. The Portland Clean Energy Fund, however, is different.

For starters, take a look at its Steering Committee: The NAACP Portland chapter, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Verde, Coalition of Communities of Color, Native American Youth and Family Center, OPAL (Organizing people/Activating Leadership), 350 PDX, Sierra Club's Oregon chapter, Audubon Society of Portland, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility and Columbia Riverkeeper.



Jo Ann Hardesty

"I love the fact that we were very intentional about reaching out to let people know that this could be a gamechanger for communities of color, which normally end up on the losing end of any initiative that intends to increase opportunities for women and minorities. It just seems not to work out the way it's supposed to," Hardesty said. "Having these groups in the driver's seat will make a huge difference."

If approved in November, the Portland Clean Energy Fund has the potential to provide about \$30 million each year for weatherization projects and rooftop solar projects, green infrastructure, local food production and job training, said Hardesty, principle partner at Consult Hardesty and a Portland City Council candidate.

While Portland has made some progress in achieving climate solutions while creating jobs, low-income residents have largely been left out of the process and the gains. The Portland Clean Energy Fund encourages women and communities of color to take proactive steps in fighting climate change while addressing social and economic inequity by providing major new economic opportunities for low-income Portlanders, the coalition states on its website.

NAMC-Oregon is a proponent of the initiative as well, and a key partner in raising awareness about it, Hardesty noted.

"I'm excited about this partnership with the association because it's absolutely vital that minority-owned firms are at the forefront of the new jobs, new opportunities being focused on renewables and climate change, and making sure the communities that are the most impacted also benefit," she said.

The campaign is in the signature-gathering phase and must submit 34,156 verified voter signatures by July 6 to qualify for the Novem-



Jo Ann Hardesty, principle partner at Consult Hardesty and a candidate for Portland City Council, says the Portland Clean Energy Fund could be a gamechanger for women and communities of color. (courtesy of Jo Ann Hardesty)

ber ballot.

"What I'm loving about the support that we've been able to build is that it includes a whole host of environmental groups, neighborhood associations, labor unions and business owners as well as faith institutions," she said.

If you support the Portland Clean Energy Fund and would like to help the campaign gather signatures, you can find signature gatherer trainings and organized signature gathering events on the website at [www.portlandcleanenergyfund.com](http://www.portlandcleanenergyfund.com).



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# A technical touch

As the new director of technical assistance at MCIP, Penny Perez is connecting prime contractors with qualified minority firms

By JOSH KULLA

What if there was a way to smoothly connect local prime contractors with qualified minority subcontractors?

In the Portland metro area, where both the public and private sectors are often involved in projects that mandate the hiring of companies owned by minorities and women, this is no small issue. Building a smooth-functioning team organized under a prime contractor is critical. That's where Penny Perez is focusing as the new director of technical assistance with the Metropolitan Contractor Improvement Partnership.

Perez took over that role earlier this spring, and she already is full of ideas for furthering the group's mission.

"At this point there's no system in place to track minority contractor participation," Perez said. "We've talked about some different ideas for doing that, maybe doing an MCIP certification where we verify the ethnicity of the owner of a small contracting company that is pursuing projects and performing on projects other than public works."

Originally hailing from Las Vegas, where she worked in commercial contracting for 25 years, Perez taps her own experience from running a certified disadvantaged business enterprise when helping those in a similar position.

"I have a thorough understanding of the business and workforce equity policies and the expectations from the agencies," she said.

In Oregon, the state's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity, or CO-BID, runs a certification system that allows minority- and women-owned firms to compete for public-sector contracts. The system also gives prime contractors a ready-made source for complying with public work requirements mandating the hiring of certain percentages of minority and women-owned business enterprises. But Perez says the CO-BID process still has shortcomings that allow skilled minority- and women-owned businesses to fall through the cracks.

"There's quite a bit of underwriting with

See **PEREZ**, pg. 6



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**NEWS FROM NAMC NATIONAL**

**Digital divide has minorities searching for app of inclusion in jobs, contracting**

At a recent Congressional hearing, Congressman G.K. Butterfield (NC-01) brought to light a very serious issue that the National Association of Minority Contractors has been echoing for some time now. There is a digital divide between minorities as tech consumers versus minorities as entrepreneurs or employees. These differences cannot be ignored.

On one hand, the industry has done a very good job of implementing mobile applications for the minority consumer. Companies such as Intel, Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat have become an everyday part of our tech life experience.

On the other hand, only one of 28 minority applicants receives a job in this field. Minorities also find it very difficult to find early-stage funding for startup companies at a rate of nearly one out of 1,000 minority entrepreneurs being able to obtain funding for a tech startup.

According to the Associated Press, minority employees are underrepresented in high paying professional jobs when compared to their white counterparts. Whether in busi-



The National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois is home to a petascale super-computer called "Blue Waters." (Wikipedia)

ness, technology, science, or architecture, more than any other group, black workers are disproportionately excluded. For this reason, many minorities are left with no choice but to seek lower-wage jobs in less prominent fields.

Even though there has been a rise in the

population of black students graduating from college, this does not mean that they are automatically granted higher paying jobs or professional employment. In fact, experts believe that professional employment for

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## PEREZ Continued from page 4

the certification process you go through with COBID and that portion is great," she said. "However, some of the work is being performed by minority contractors who aren't certified for one reason or another, mainly because they're not pursuing public work, but they are participating in these projects. So it would be really cool to be able to monitor and gauge the non-public work construction that is occurring and being performed by minority contractors."

Some prime contractors try to track this type of information themselves, but that's no substitute for an industry-wide database.

"At this point, there's no system in place to track minority contractor participation," Perez said, "regardless of whether or not that contractor is certified; so that's kind of the big picture of the problem."

To help start improving the situation, MCIP recently introduced a new contractor assessment program that takes stock of each company's capabilities, experience, personnel, accounting systems and more. Perez likened it to a sort of pre-qualification application.

"Really, the analogy is like going to the doctor," she said. "The doctor is going to assess, diagnose and treat. And so with a CAP, we assess. We have a 50-question assessment

**"At this point, there's no system in place to track minority contractor participation regardless of whether or not that contractor is certified; so that's kind of the big picture of the problem."**

PENNY PEREZ

... and we take that information and we diagnose. We look at it and say this particular company is in an excellent position to pursue this type of work at this level of contract valuation in this market, so we could talk small commercial, we could talk large commercial, we could talk multi-family residential, several different areas."

A company's assessment also looks at potential deficiencies and training needs. In all, the CAP is intended to ensure that prime contractors looking for qualified subs will be able to find exactly what they're seeking.

"So, we are here to support them to ensure they are set up for success," Perez said. "And part of that is having frank conversations with them about what they are truly ready to pursue in the contracting world. So once we have that information around our contractors, when we are contacted by a prime contractor, we can make the connections."

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ZEELAND COMPANY LLC

# Making a clean sweep

Tony Mekkam started doing janitorial work to help pay his way through college, and continued to do it on the side while working for as a corrections counselor for the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. By 1995, he had started his own company.

The name of his company has changed - it is now called Zeeland Company LLC - but his expertise in janitorial work and final cleaning at construction sites remains as top-notch as ever. He now employs nine people and, while he primarily operates in Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington and Clark counties, Mekkam's team does work as far north as Tacoma.

"No matter how big or how small, we do them all," he says of the variety of projects his company does.

Owning a small business can be challenging at times, including when clients don't pay their bills on time and cash flow becomes tight. However, the rewards out-

weigh the difficulties.

"When a client is happy with our performance, that gives me joy," Mekkam says.

He has learned several valuable lessons by owning his own company. He left his job with the county in 2001 to run his janitorial business full time, but the Great Recession soon followed and brought financial uncertainty with it.

"If you hang on with persistence you can usually wait it out," Mekkam says, adding the down times help one make the most of the good times. "Right now, it's a booming era and there is a lot of construction going on, so we have a lot of jobs."

Mekkam joined NAMC-Oregon last year and said he appreciates the information and training he receives from the organization as well as the networking opportunities that help him meet potential customers and learn more about jobs that are available.

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# How architecture birthed a cultural phenomenon

BY JOSH KULLA

On paper it's a revolutionary approach to urban design.

But using the poetic rhythm of hip-hop music to inform the designs of buildings and spaces in America's largest cities actually can make a whole lot of sense.

The lyrics of groundbreaking hip-hop artists like Public Enemy, Kool Moe Dee or Tupac Shakur, just to name a few, often derive from the experiences of people of color living in America's poorest urban communities. In particular, the public housing tower blocks that arose in the 1960s and '70s were instrumental in helping form one of the most popular forms of current American music.

Now, nationally renowned architect Michael Ford is forging ahead with a mission to use that music to create new and revitalized urban designs. Ford, a native of Detroit, runs his own design and consulting firm, BrandNu Design, in Madison, Wisconsin. And in a larger sense, he's trying to find a creative new way to revamp and reuse urban spaces in a way that reflects residents' experiences and needs.

"That's one of my challenges now is how do you take this and use not only the forms that can be generated from the music, but how can we as urban planners, architects, designers, how do we respond to some of the stories that we hear?" Ford said. "As architects, we hear those stories about the communities that we're building and it's creating the backdrop. So, how can we create better environments? That's the challenge that I'm looking at now."

Ford recently presented his Hip-Hop Architecture lecture at the Ziba Auditorium in Northwest Portland. He highlighted how modernist architects and planners helped create the urban environments that gave rise to a new form of music and expression. In short, as Ford said in the title of his TEDx Talk, hip-hop is a post-occupancy evaluation of modern architecture.

"It's all about listening to people, understanding their situation and not just trying to design for a magazine cover," he told the packed house.

Ford combines sociology, popular culture and urban design in his lectures, which explain how architecture has played such a large part in creating contemporary hip-hop culture.

"The idea of combining architecture and black music is not a new concept," he said.

For example, the late Charles-Édouard Jean-



Architect Michael Ford gives pointers to Mount Tabor Middle School student Isaiah Paz on Wednesday during the Hip Hop Architecture Camp at Benson Polytechnic High School. (Josh Kulla photo/courtesy of DJC Oregon)



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See **HIP-HOP DESIGN**, pg. 9

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neret, known as Le Corbusier, created early 20th century designs that included a grandiose proposal to redevelop Paris' center by building massive series of tower blocks. He was turned down, but the concept eventually found roots in the U.S. as public housing high-rises. Le Corbusier also was a lover of jazz music, which inspired his work.

Ultimately, what occurred in American housing projects was exactly what had been predicted when Parisian officials rejected Le Corbusier — and it was expressed in hip-hop music originating in The Bronx and radiating outward.

“The ghetto is not a result of actions of African-Americans,” Ford said. “It’s actually the result of a lot of us who are in this room.”

Ford also is intent on promoting architecture and urban planning among underrepresented youth, especially those of color. To do that, he created a one-week Hip Hop Architecture Camp for students middle-school age and younger.

“Less than two percent of architects in the United States are African-American and less than 0.2 percent are African-American women — that’s the entire country,” he said. “So, with the camp, one of the challenges that has been identified by the American Institute of Architects is early exposure or lack thereof. I mean, you can’t be what you don’t know about.”

Ford held his Portland camp at Benson Polytechnic High School. There, he taught approximately a dozen local students the basics of hip-hop architecture and how to apply it to a model city made of Legos.

Students were broken up into groups and each was given a verse from “I Go To Work,” a 1999 single from Kool Moe Dee. Taking that verse, they analyzed the rhymes in the lyrics to graph out a two-dimensional chart. Then, the graph was used to create a three-dimensional model of a planned city using Legos as well as Tinkercad — a streamlined version of Autocad, Autodesk’s industry-standard design software.

“For each line in a song, each word, you add another Lego block,” Mount Tabor Middle School sixth grader Isaiah Paz explained. “Each word that is highlighted or rhymes with another word, that’s where you stack a block for each letter that there is. So, for the first line there are six words, and so I’d put six blocks down like that.”

Ford had little trouble keeping Paz and the others interested.

“The kids have been engaged,” Ford said during the weeklong camp. “Yesterday, for example, we tried to take a break, and people did not want to take a break; they wanted to keep going on their projects. So that’s a good sign.”



Kimah Cruws, a third-grade student at Boise-Eliot/Humboldt School in Portland, works on a Lego model of a cityscape she created at Michael Ford’s Hip Hop Architecture Camp. (Josh Kulla photo/courtesy of DJC Oregon)

Paz concentrated on his work with quiet intensity, placing row after row of blocks in patterns based on Kool Moe Dee’s lyrics. The outlines of a cityscape were easily visible in the Legos, with rows of high-rise towers, parks and other public spaces clearly evident.

This was repeated across the classroom, as Hacker associates Joe Swank and Jackie Santa Lucia also worked with students.

Swank said he and others at his firm were introduced to Ford’s work two years ago, and it inspired them to eventually create the “Your

Streets, Your Voice” program for underrepresented youth in Portland. Working with The CENTER, the program gives teens an intensive two-month look at architecture and design and opens up career possibilities they probably never knew existed.

“The more we dug into this, the more we realized it wasn’t a firm problem; it was an industry problem,” Swank said. “We realize this is a long game, and we have to engage students earlier and catch them when they’re still in school.”

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**NATIONAL** Continued from page 5

many minority students still remains out of reach in the U.S., where opportunities are hampered because of the plaguing issue of exclusion based on race. The Associated Press report also shared that the ratio of white to black employees in management remains 10 to 1. Meanwhile, in the area of math and computers, the ratio is 8 to 1; in education, 7 to 1; and 12 to 1 in law.

In Silicon Valley, tech companies and startups are struggling to achieve inclusion and diversity in the technology field. Meanwhile, in Seattle, white employees outnumber minority workers at a ratio of 28 to 1 in both math- and computer-related fields.

Another issue is the lack of access to supercomputers or data centers. At a cost of \$200 million per center, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) do not receive the same level of support from federal or corporate funding sources to support investments in the computer systems for their technology programs. In contrast, consider the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois, home to a petascale supercomputer called “Blue Waters;” and its \$208 million price tag was authorized by the National Science Foundation, a U.S. government agency. Large-scale server farms like the one at the University of Illinois are powering your Gmail experience or streaming your Netflix programming.

A big problem for small business consultants trying to break into the technology arena is that many of the jobs to in the industry are virtual and offer little or no job security. They are part-time, short-term contract jobs, with variable hours and no benefits.

Having access to opportunities in the tech industry is greatly needed in minority communities. By being part of the building process of some of these data facilities, NAMC has witnessed the impact of these \$200 million dollar data centers across the country on local communities through utilizing skilled workers, installing data lines, chiller systems, water infrastructure, and megawatt power distribution centers. Minorities know that inclusion is the only way to level the playing field of diversity and opportunity. Google has had a data center presence in the Georgia region. Over the years, they have invested over \$1.2 billion in Douglas County. This fully operational site created over 350 jobs and supports the communities in which our employees live and work. They have awarded more than \$7.5 million to Georgia nonprofits and schools. Their employees are volunteers in the community. Additionally, projects have developed much needed recycled water system technology for the center’s

cooling needs. Minority communities could benefit greatly from data center technology, construction jobs and long-term operation along with the opportunities provided by fulfillment centers used by companies like Amazon and Ebay.

As difficult as it is for Americans trying to break into the technology field, it is more challenging for minorities. Black unemployment rates remain nearly twice as high as white unemployment rates. Black households earn less income and have dramatically less wealth than white households. This is true at all levels of education and in every region. According to a report from the Asset Funders Network, the median wealth of single African-Americans is stunning at less than \$1000, while \$1000 for Latinos, and \$30,000 for single white men.

It is true that there is less poverty now than there was 50 years ago. Minorities have started to close the education gap — in graduating from high school, attaining a college or advanced degree — but technical resources and federal partnerships are still needed to increase the opportunity for inclusion.

Companies that dominate the tech-industry sectors appear to be more comfortable with what is familiar, rather than diversity;

**In Silicon Valley, tech companies and startups are struggling to achieve inclusion and diversity in the technology field. Meanwhile, in Seattle, white employees outnumber minority workers at a ratio of 28 to 1 in both math- and computer-related fields.**

and some still maintain hiring practices that are passively discriminatory against the unfamiliarity of black and brown graduates, consultants, and contractors. NAMC is committed to continuing to advocate for diversity and inclusion across the technology industry, not only relating to opportunities to design and build data centers and other technology infrastructure; but also in employment and other entrepreneurial opportunities.

The National Association Minority Contractors, based in Washington, D.C., is the parent organization of NAMC-Oregon. For more information about the national association, visit [namcnational.org/](http://namcnational.org/).



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# Metro moving forward with affordable housing bond

The Metro Council has voted to place a \$652.8 million affordable housing bond measure on November ballots. The bond would cost property owners an average of \$60 per year.

The affordable housing bond will be a first for Metro, an agency better known for promoting recycling and analyzing urban growth boundaries. The regional government kicked off an equitable housing initiative in 2015, and has since continued to work on affordable housing.

Metro estimates it would be able to build 3,900 affordable units if Oregon voters approve a constitutional amendment that will also be on November ballots to give local governments more flexibility in spending affordable housing dollars. If the constitutional amendment fails, Metro estimates it would be able to build 2,400 units with the bond dollars.

Metro's measure would come after Portland's own \$258.4 million housing bond passed overwhelmingly in November 2016. Metro's much larger bond would be spread regionally, with Portland, Beaverton, Hillsboro and Gresham getting 90 percent of the money. The remainder would be used by Metro to pur-

chase land for affordable housing.

The bond effort comes as rents in some Portland neighborhoods have increased by 70 percent in the past year, said Martha Bennett, Metro's chief operating officer.

However, according to some surveys from rental listing firms, rents in Portland have plateaued and even declined in recent months. But sale prices have continued to escalate, hitting a record \$405,000 median price in the Portland-metro area in April, according to the listing service RMLS.

Metro and its partner jurisdictions would be able to use the bond money to build new affordable housing, purchase existing affordable housing at risk of displacement or buy vacant land. Some of the dollars would be devoted to deeply affordable housing available to renters earning 30 percent or less of median family income.

One of the goals for the bond calls for 50 percent of the bond-funded units having two bedrooms or more. That would help address a profound need for family-size affordable housing, particularly in communities of color, Metro officials said.

Metro Council President Tom Hughes, at a

recent work session, discussed how the bond package could be presented to voters. He expressed concern that Metro risked backlash if officials "convince the public that they won't see any homeless people on the streets."

Metro will be careful not to oversell the bond package, Bennett said.

An oversight committee would likely be formed to keep watch over the bond spending. Councilor Sam Chase sought assurances the committee's role would be advisory, and Metro Council would retain the final decision on the agency's bond spending.

"I think this is a good package," Chase said. "If we go for perfect, we'll never get a package."

Metro anticipates Portland's Home Forward and Clackamas and Washington counties contributing federal Section 8 housing bond money to some projects. Some affordable units would be subsidized by charging market rents for other units.

City of Portland representatives have weighed in on an advisory group's work that helped shape the bond proposal. Mayor Ted Wheeler supports Metro's housing bond, spokesman Michael Cox said.

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# WOMEN OF VISION 2018

## DO YOU KNOW A WOMAN WHO IS SHAPING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

The Women of Vision Awards honors women who are shaping the built environment through outstanding leadership, mentoring efforts, community involvement, and promotion of industry diversity.

**NOMINATE TODAY!**

Visit: [djcoregon.com/wovmagazine/women-of-vision-event](http://djcoregon.com/wovmagazine/women-of-vision-event)

Nomination Deadline: August 10

**AWARDS PROGRAM:**

**Tuesday, October 18, 2018 • 4:30-7:30 PM**

Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront • 1401 SW Naito Pkwy., Portland, OR 97201

**DJCOregon**  
Oregon's Building Connections

MCIP offers services to small businesses, agencies, owners, and general contractors to help build contractor skills, relationships, and meet diversity goals.

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