

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 6, 2007

Contact: Lauren Wright;
202-942-8246; lwright@naeh.org

Portland's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness reduces chronically homeless population by 70 percent.

Region a great example of success of national ten year plans to end homelessness.

Washington, DC— Having experienced a record 70 percent drop in the number of chronically homeless people living on the street in the last two years, Portland, Oregon and the surrounding area of Multnomah County are among an increasing number of communities that are making progress in reducing homelessness.

Portland's remarkable success with chronically homeless people—those who have a disability and are homeless for long periods or repeatedly—demonstrates the region's effectiveness in helping people who have been on the streets or in shelter for long periods access permanent housing.

"We knew we were doing the right thing by adopting a plan to end homelessness in Portland, and we are thrilled to see such great results in the first two years," said Portland Mayor Tom Potter. "This is a true testament to our community's effort to helping people end their homelessness every day."

Overall homelessness in Portland has dropped from 5,103 in 2005 to 4,456 in 2007, a decrease of 13 percent and a dramatic reversal in an upward trajectory.

The success in Portland and Multnomah County is attributed to the adoption of key elements of the region's ten year plan to end homelessness. Portland's plan focuses on adopting a Housing First approach, which emphasizes moving people who are homeless into permanent affordable housing linked to supportive services as quickly as possible, minimizing stays in shelter or other temporary housing.

"The decline in the numbers of people on the street shows that offering housing with services to the chronically homeless works. If we continue in this trend, we can literally end the institution of homelessness," said City Commissioner Erik Sten, who oversees the City's housing and homeless programs.

In 2000, The National Alliance to End Homelessness proposed that communities adopt ten year plans to end homelessness. Portland adopted its plan in 2004, and the declining number of people who are homeless is an indication of what can be achieved when communities focus on getting homeless people back into housing quickly.

"Portland has been extremely successful due to its implementation of a well thought out ten year plan that has been supported by a partnership between the nonprofit, public and business sectors," said Nan Roman, President of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. "From the local government to the individual homeless advocate, Portland exhibits a strong dedication to ending homelessness."

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, people are more successful getting back on their feet, securing employment, and benefiting from treatment when they have a stable place to live.

- more -

"Cities across the nation can learn from the success that Portland has achieved. Reducing homelessness is a very achievable goal," Roman said. "But to really end homelessness, we also need increased federal attention to the affordable housing crisis faced by communities across the country," Roman said.

Since 2000, more than 300 communities across the United States have made a commitment to end homelessness through their adoption of ten year plans outlining a wide range of strategies with an emphasis on permanent, affordable housing and support.

For more information on the City of Portland, please contact Heather Lyons, Program Manager, Ending Homelessness, at 503-957-7108.

###

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, mission-driven organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. The Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions. Working collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, the Alliance provides data and research that lead to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness.

For more information on The National Alliance to End Homelessness, visit: www.endhomelessness.org