

# Summer 2023 Parks and Nature quarterly update

Covering bond activities and investments from April-June 2023



## **BOND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMPLETED: APRIL-JUNE 2023**

**From April-June 2023, staff have completed the following outreach across bond programs:**

- Conversations with 36 landowners about land acquisition
- 18 conversations with park providers about land acquisitions opportunities
- Around 100 people attended two idea collection events for Community Choice grants in April. More information about this process can be found on page 3.
- Two meetings of the Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Review committee of six community members selected through an open recruitment process to review the applications submitted.

## **BOND REPORTING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES COMPLETED**

[A set of infographics](#) are posted on Metro’s website to visualize bond progress over time to the public. These are meant to serve as a compliment to the [storytelling](#) that we’ve been doing to highlight specific projects and bond wide progress.

## **BOND ACTIVITIES AND INVESTMENTS COMPLETED: APRIL-JUNE 2023**

### **Protect and restore land activities from April-June 2023**

[oregonmetro.gov/protect-and-restore-land](https://oregonmetro.gov/protect-and-restore-land)

The team continues to ramp up outreach to landowners across the region to create a pipeline of opportunities for acquisition in alignment with the targets and goals approved by the Metro Council in 2022. The team will grow to three when a real estate negotiator joins in August.

Most recently, the team completed three acquisitions that exemplify the promise of this bond measure to strengthen habitat connectivity in priority areas and foster partnerships with jurisdictional partners especially in the urban area. The includes the acquisition of a 20-acre parcel in the East Buttes target area to help build wildlife connectivity between East Bliss Butte and Sunshine Butte, a highly used wildlife corridor, which moves us closer to creating 350 contiguous acres of publicly owned wildlife habitat. This acquisition protects over 2,000 ft. of headwater streams in the Upper Johnson Creek

watershed and culturally significant plant communities.

The team also completed the first acquisition in the urban area target area to protect a 240-foot section of the mainstem of Crystal Springs Creek, a tributary of Johnson Creek and restore native and culturally significant plant communities in riparian and floodplain areas. Metro and the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) partnered to purchase the property, and BES will be the long-term manager of the site. Finally, the team acquired 5.3 acres in the East Buttes target area via donation from North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD) and the second trail gap acquisition along a segment of Marine Drive Trail.

With these completed acquisitions, the team has completed a total of 17 purchases totaling 529 acres across 13 target areas with the 2019 parks and nature bond. See more specific information about acquisitions in the [appendix of this report](#).

### **Local share activities completed from April-June 2023**

[oregonmetro.gov/localshare](https://oregonmetro.gov/localshare)

The local share team is working with the region’s park providers to submit priority projects for bond local share funding.

The team is finalizing intergovernmental agreements:

- Portland Parks and Recreation has five projects: Whitaker Ponds Natural Area, Wilkes Headwaters

Natural Area, Hoyt Arboretum Bristlecone Pine Trail ADA improvements, Park Pathway Lighting Renovation, and Rose City Golf Trails.

- Forest Grove’s Stites Park, which will build a nature park with a community garden, picnic, and play areas.
- Wilsonville’s Frog Pond West property acquisition, which will protect natural park land within a neighborhood that is currently being developed.

In addition, the team has reviewed a project submittal from North Clackamas Parks and Recreation Department for the Concord Property Park project in Oak Lodge.

**Walking and biking trails activities completed from April-June 2023**

Since Council approved [12 trail grant awards for \\$19.5 million](#) across the region, the team is close to finalizing intergovernmental agreements for 8 of the 12 projects.

**Take care of Metro parks activities completed from April-June 2023**

Progress continues on health, safety and accessibility improvements at Blue Lake and Oxbow, where projects are heading towards breaking new ground.

At Blue Lake Park, Metro is replacing the park’s water and sewer systems as part of park renovations. In order to complete the work safely and efficiently, Blue Lake Park will be closed to the public from September 5, 2023 until spring 2024. The disc golf course and the Marine Drive bicycle trail will remain open.

Staff have convened a partner cohort to participate and help shape the process around the Blue Lake renovation project, made up of 7 community members who responded to an open recruitment process, a few of whom participated in previous bond engagements.

**Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants activities completed from April-June 2023**

On June 29, the Metro Council [approved \\$2.7 million of Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants](#) for seven projects ranging from investing in greenspace and recreational improvements, to an affordable housing development in Clackamas County, to supporting Friends of Tryon Creek and Oregon State Parks in creating a new education space for the whole community within the urban forest, grounded in ancestral design.

An external review committee reviewed applications and recommended the slate of seven projects.

**[Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice grants](#) activities completed from April-June 2023,**

The Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice pilot, which has \$2 million in funding to support projects in District 4, western Washington County, has completed the idea collection phase, receiving over 120 project ideas from community members. Events planned this summer will give community members a chance to review and refine a list of 50 ideas that have been vetted by Metro staff

and park providers in district 4 before preliminary community voting begins in September. The team has been working hard to reach community members where they are at, promoting this opportunity through mailing extra copies of Our Big Backyard to residents in district 4 to raise awareness of this opportunity, publicizing activities on social media and holding events in community spaces. The goal is to have the community shape and select a recommended slate of projects that will come for Council consideration and review this fall.

**[Large scale community visions](#) activities completed from April-June 2023**

In May 2023, the Metro Council designated up to \$15 million in bond funding for three projects for the pilot round of large scale community visions.

- Trust for Public Land/OSU – Forest Acquisition (\$3.5 million)
- OMSI+CRITFC– Waterfront Education Park (\$10 million)
- Albina Vision Trust – Acquisition/Development (\$5 million)

Staff are currently working with each of these three entities to complete work needed to ensure readiness to finalize an eventual funding award.





## Bond related community engagement snapshots

### Community choice grants: April-June 2023

In April 2023, the Community Choice grants pilot process in district 4 entered the idea collection phase. The team cast a broad net to engage community members in district 4 around submitting potential project ideas, using multiple avenues for outreach at community hubs where community was already congregating and translating all materials in English and Spanish.

- Hosted two community events in April at Shute Park library in Hillsboro and Tualatin Hills Nature Park where about 100 people attended. The team worked with partners in district 4 to select these event locations for their proximity to equity focus areas and/or their role as community hubs. At each event, the team provided language interpretation for Spanish, Vietnamese, and American Sign Language and offered multiple ways for community members to share project ideas such as writing, drawing, audio recordings, and building miniature park models.
- Tabled at 7-8 different community events in district 4. These included: the Hillsboro Farmers' Market, the Forest Grove Farmers' Market with Adelante Mujeres and Dia de los Niños celebrations with Centro Cultural and THPRD.
- Promoted idea submission opportunities through Metro's social media, website and email blasts to organizations who were contacted about the community kick off events in March and individuals and organizations who participated in previous bond refinement activities.
- Sent an additional 50,000 copies of Metro's Our Big Backyard summer 2023 publication to households in district 4 in equity focus areas to increase awareness of the community choice grants process and upcoming opportunities to participate.

As a result of this engagement and outreach, the team has collected 118 submissions for playgrounds, dog parks, wetland habitat, beaver crossings and more. In May and June, Metro staff worked with park providers in district 4 and a committee of community members (called the pilot review and design committee) to review and vet the project ideas. The committee recommended 50 projects to move forward to the project development phase.



In this phase, Metro invited community members, including those who shared ideas, to community design workshops in July where they worked with parks staff and designers to take the 50 ideas and further develop them into viable project concepts. With those specifics added, the projects will head to an initial vote on July 26, 2023 and a final vote in November 2023. The final voting period, open to anyone in district 4 who is 11 and older, will finalize a recommended slate of awards for the Metro Council to consider and approve.

**Blue Lake Park renovation engagement case study: April-June 2023**

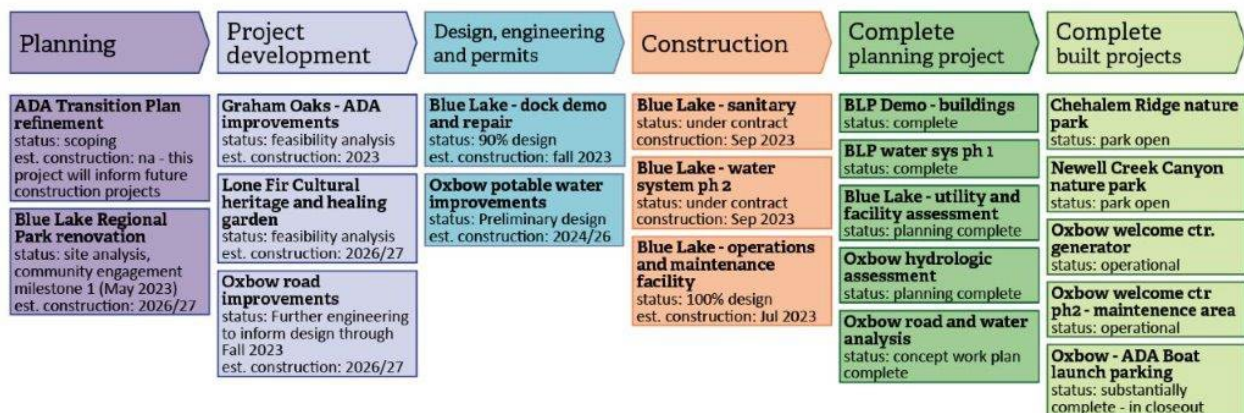
When Metro staff presented an update to the oversight committee about planned engagement activities around the Blue Lake Park renovation project, staff described three levels of community engagement—a broad audience, targeted focus groups and a small cohort of community members.

This spring, Metro staff completed an open recruitment for and selection of community members to participate in a partner cohort to participate alongside staff during the entirety of the Blue Lake Park renovation project. Staff are intending to convene this cohort to collaborate on an ongoing basis with Metro staff and consultants to advance a renovation project for Blue Lake Park that reflects existing site constraints, budgets and priorities shared by community during previous engagement.

Staff shared information about the open recruitment with the Blue Lake Park project mailing list, the list of individuals and community organizations that participated in previous bond refinements and asked community partners to share with their networks. Staff received 40 applications and selected 7 including some individuals who had previously participated in bond-related engagement activities in the last 1-2 years.

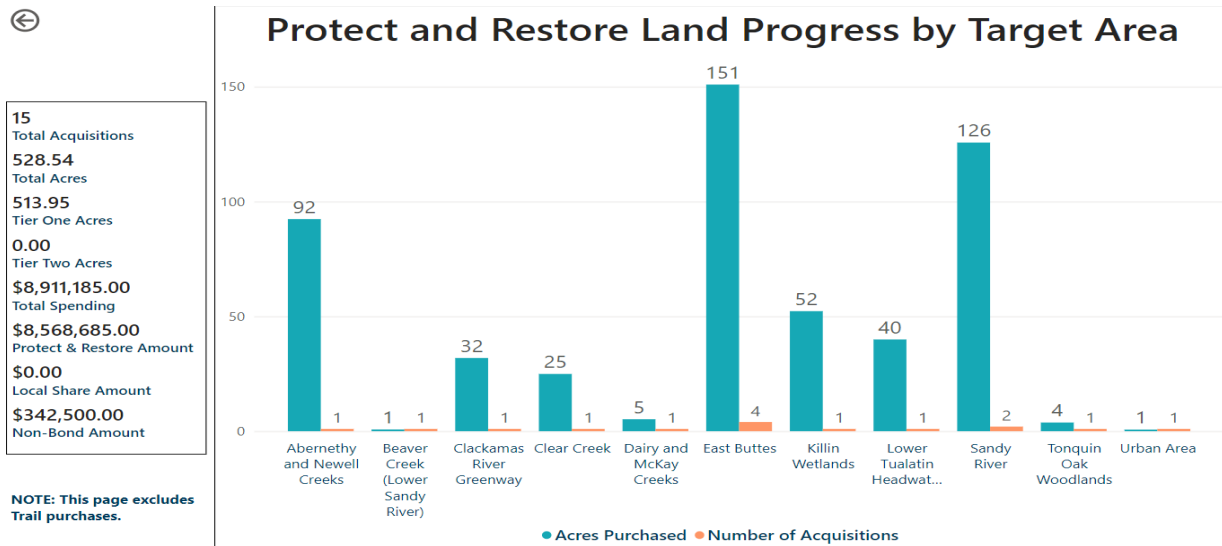
**Status of bond funded Metro parks capital projects (Take Care of Metro Parks)**

**Take care of Metro parks projects**  
Project status as of June 2023



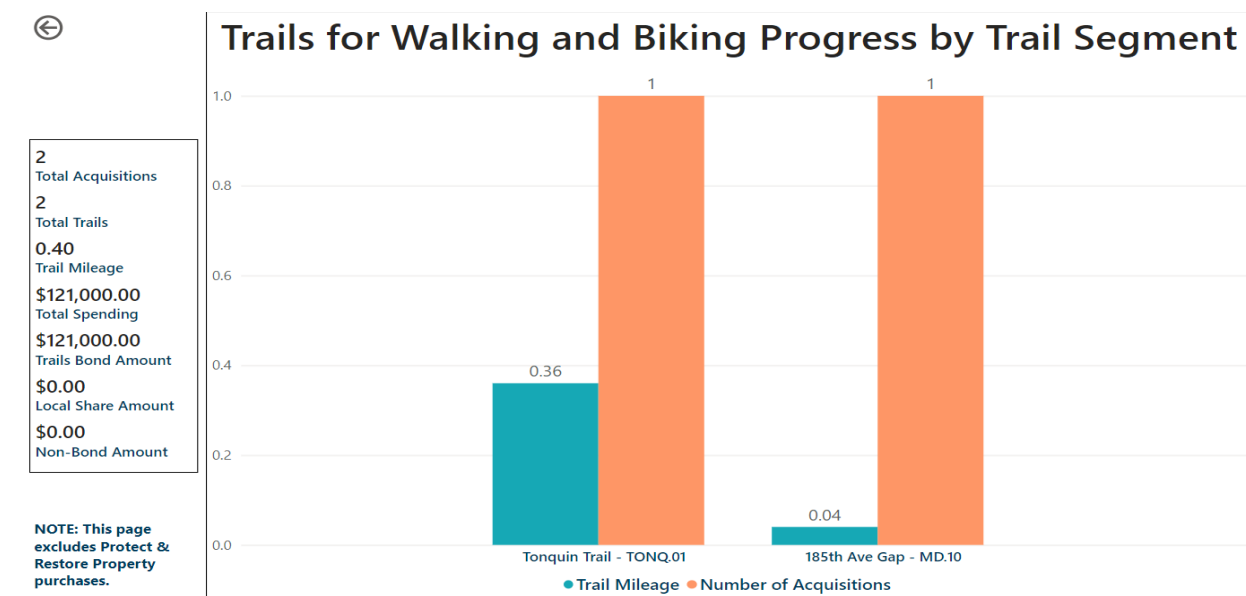
Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023)

### Acquisitions to date by target area



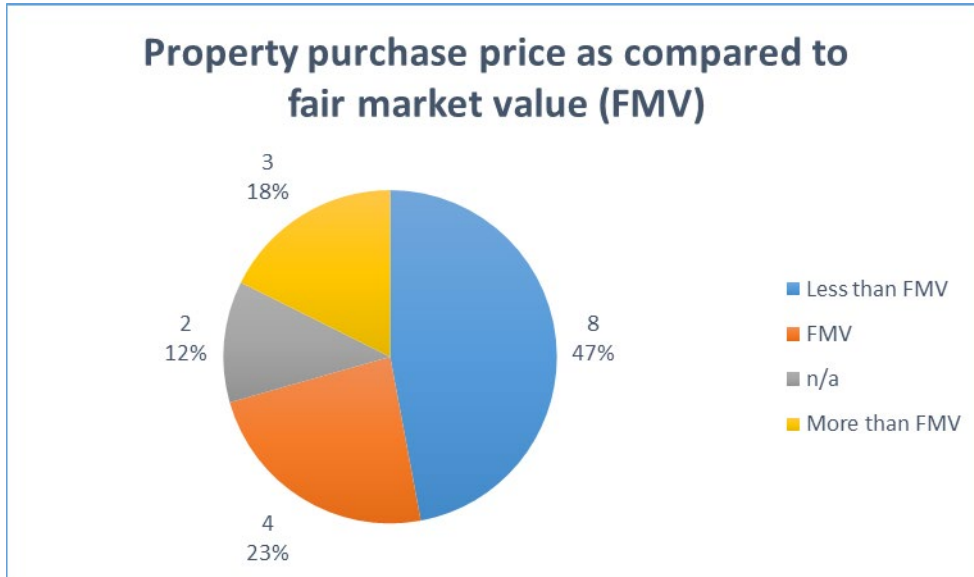
#### What is this chart?

Through the policy established in the [2019 parks and nature bond measure](#) and the [target area refinement plans](#) the Metro Council has directed staff to acquire properties in 24 regional target areas that meet the refinement plan goals. Each property varies in size and other features. This chart displays the both the number of properties purchased and acres protected in each target area through the protect and restore land program over the lifetime of the 2019 bond. Through June 2023, Metro staff have acquired 16 properties totaling 529 acres across 13 target areas, along with two trail acquisitions. This number will expand over time as more properties are purchased across all target areas and trail corridors.



Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023)

## Purchase price vs. market value

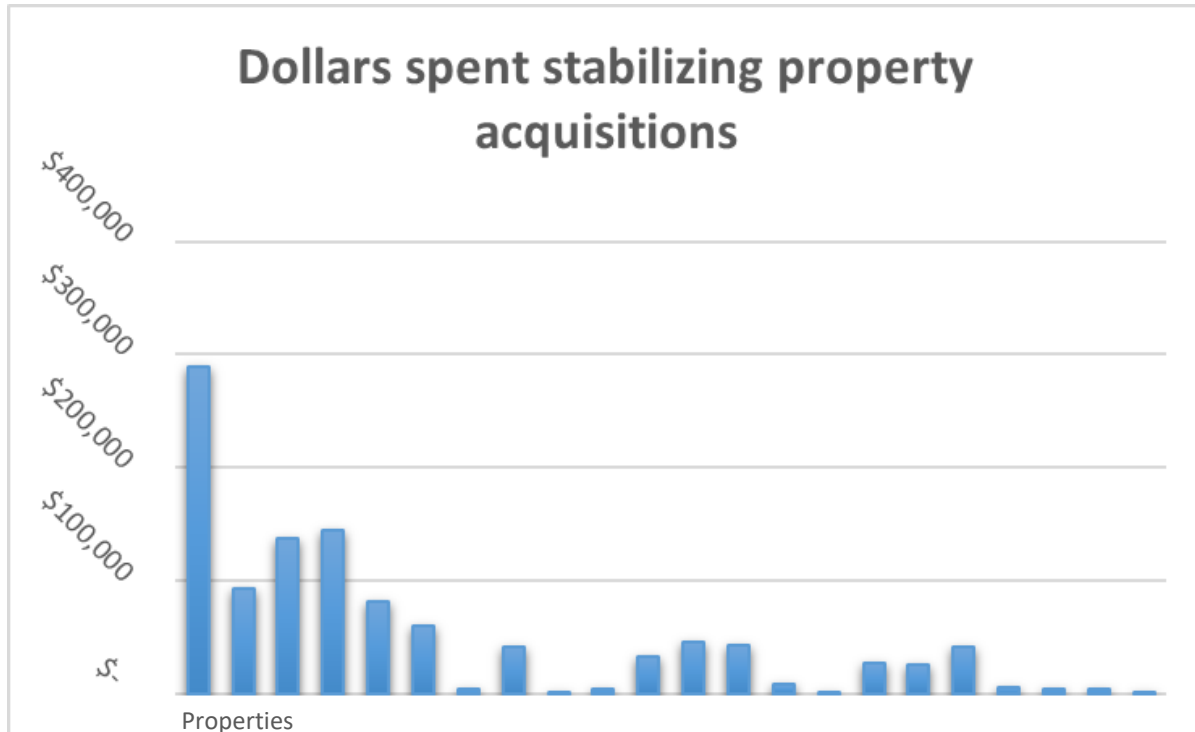


### ***What is this chart?***

The Metro Council may direct staff to purchase property at any price, but through the policy established in the Natural Areas Work Plan, the Metro Council has delegated authority to staff to acquire properties for fair market value as supported by an independent appraisal (with the exception of properties purchased for less than \$50,000, which do not require an appraisal). The Chief Operating Officer may purchase a property for up to 10% more than the value established by an appraisal provided certain conditions are met. This chart shows that most properties purchased to date were for fair market value or an appraisal was not required (i.e., the purchase price was less than \$50,000). This includes all purchases funded through the protect and restore land and create trails for walking and biking programs.

Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023)

### Cost of stabilization to date



2019 bond dollars spent through June 30, 2023  
 Note: Each blue bar represents one property.

#### What is this chart?

Stabilization is one of the four program activities eligible for protect and restore land funds. Stabilization is the phase of management that follows acquisition. During stabilization Metro uses bond funds to address threats that would otherwise compromise the values for which a new natural area is acquired. As no two properties are the same or have the same conditions present, stabilization plans and costs will vary by property and the conditions present. Metro uses a function-based approach to identify and implement stabilization activities appropriate to each site.

Function-based stabilization focuses on actions that protect high ecological function and shift currently degrading conditions to a positive trend leading to Metro to meeting the conservation objectives for which the property was purchased. Common stabilization actions include natural resource enhancement and property management and security actions. Important ecological functions addressed include key features such as: soil erosion control, habitat quality and trend, temperature and flow modification of streams, and public safety.

Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023)

## Constraints

The market continues to be dynamic and challenging for off market transactions. The largest challenges in the market are still related to timelines and seller expectations of value – but Metro real estate staff are now also seeing impacts of low inventory and high interest rates on willing seller cultivation, i.e., the desire for people to sell their property and move. To overcome this barrier the real estate team is utilizing tools such as land use actions to purchase portions of property with conservation values while sellers retain ownership of portions with homes and other structures, however, land use actions add 4-6 months on to a transaction timeline.

Additional constraints related to the team’s ability to complete transactions quickly include the desire to work with public agency partners on acquisitions, primarily in the urban target area and the regional trail network. Metro must be willing to work on the partner’s timeline and within their capacity to complete these purchases, which can vary.

Capacity is stagnant as one new hire referenced in the last quarterly report is no longer with Metro, and one long time staff member departed in June 2023; however, a new senior real estate specialist will start at Metro in August 2023. There are still two vacancies which have been difficult to fill. When the team is fully staffed, there will be 4 FTE (full time equivalent) working on acquiring real estate for Metro.



**PN bond financial reporting will be added in August once year end close is complete. Metro’s fiscal year ends June 30.**

<b>2019 Parks and Nature Bond - Spend by Program Area</b>					
	<b>FY20</b>	<b>FY21</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>Total Spend</b>
<b>Protect/Restore</b>					
Personnel	8,897	1,027,574	1,318,586	1,772,632	4,127,689
M&S or Capital	120,063	843,385	5,104,935	5,311,633	11,380,016
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,960</b>	<b>1,870,959</b>	<b>6,423,521</b>	<b>7,084,265</b>	<b>15,507,705</b>
<b>Take Care of Metro Parks</b>					
Personnel	8,897	642,133	1,334,500	1,199,311	3,184,841
M&S or Capital	221,847	3,051,112	2,279,728	2,820,384	8,373,071
<b>Total</b>	<b>230,744</b>	<b>3,693,245</b>	<b>3,614,228</b>	<b>4,019,694</b>	<b>11,557,911</b>
<b>Local Share</b>					
Personnel	29,397	213,678	240,033	236,912	720,020
M&S or Capital		2,464	2,492,200	1,616,171	4,110,835
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,397</b>	<b>216,142</b>	<b>2,732,233</b>	<b>1,853,083</b>	<b>4,830,855</b>
<b>Grants</b>					
Personnel	12,847	184,414	240,528	364,932	802,721
M&S or Capital		2,061	85,755	71,588	159,404
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,847</b>	<b>186,475</b>	<b>326,283</b>	<b>436,520</b>	<b>962,125</b>
<b>Trails</b>					
Personnel	8,489	243,278	233,358	313,024	798,149
M&S or Capital	3,825	818	148,071	17,165	169,879
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,314</b>	<b>244,096</b>	<b>381,429</b>	<b>330,189</b>	<b>968,028</b>
<b>Community Visions</b>					
Personnel	-	3,480	121,359	29,181	154,020
M&S or Capital	-	-	-	434	434
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,480</b>	<b>121,359</b>	<b>29,615</b>	<b>154,454</b>
<b>Total Program Spend</b>	<b>414,262</b>	<b>6,214,397</b>	<b>13,599,053</b>	<b>13,753,367</b>	<b>33,981,079</b>
<b>Admin</b>					
Personnel (tax exempt)	100,692	555,696	591,933	647,919	1,662,097
M&S or Capital or Transfer (tax exempt)	402,467	990,481	2,934,472	2,929,420	6,111,656
Personnel (taxable)	10	330	395	-	735
M&S or Capital or Transfer (taxable)	309,359	27,344	544,812	489,411	1,205,801
<b>Total</b>	<b>812,528</b>	<b>1,573,851</b>	<b>4,071,612</b>	<b>4,066,750</b>	<b>8,980,290</b>
<b>Total Bond Spend</b>	<b>1,226,790</b>	<b>7,788,248</b>	<b>17,670,665</b>	<b>17,820,117</b>	<b>44,505,820</b>
Administrative Spending as a % of Total Bond Spend	66.23%	20.21%	23.04%	22.82%	20.18%