

Frequently Asked Questions about the Crime Prevention Program's Hub Office Proposal

February 2011

What is the hub?

The hub is an idea for a single, central office space for ONI's Crime Prevention Program. All of the members of the Crime Prevention staff would move into the location if the idea is approved. The Graffiti Abatement Program might also move into the space.

What features is CP looking for in a new location?

An eastside location, geographically central to the city, with about 3,000 square feet of space. Close to public transit, and with free parking. Enough space for meeting rooms and a storage area.

What's wrong with the current office space arrangement?

Crime Prevention is currently located in eight office spaces around the city. No rent is paid on any location except for City Hall, where the manager has her office. On its surface, the arrangement seems ideal: staff is close to the neighborhoods they serve, and space is free. However, a closer examination reveals a less rosy picture.

Free office space is difficult to obtain, and is temporary. Few landlords want to give away space for free and commit to a lengthy lease. Since 2006, CP staff members have moved 15 times, representing thousands of hours of staff time, and thousands of dollars in wiring and moving fees. Staff members spend a lot of time obtaining necessary supplies and equipment so they can do their work; the program budget does not allow eight fully-equipped offices. Staff member territories are large enough that they can drive as many as five miles from their office to a neighborhood they serve. Few of their offices have any significant walk in traffic. Most of their work is done out in the field, on the phone, or by email. Finally, staff are isolated, which lowers their morale, creativity, productivity, and efficiency.

The Crime Prevention staff and ONI management believe that a hub office would resolve these issues.

Wouldn't a lease be too expensive?

Depending on the details, paying for a lease would cost about the same as, or less than, the current arrangement.

Wouldn't a hub office mean more travel time?

Staff members serving the neighborhoods close to the edges of the city may spend more time driving than they do now. We believe this would be more than balanced by the efficiencies gained by a move into a hub office.

What program efficiencies would be obtained by moving in together?

Management would no longer spend hours seeking office space. Staff would no longer be disrupted by frequent moves. Staff would no longer spend time arranging pickup or delivery of supplies, or traveling to use copiers, fax machines, or mail rooms. Staff would more easily and frequently collaborate on projects and explore new ideas without having to spend extra time finding a meeting time and place for the conversation. The manager could more easily supervise and assist staff. Staff would share one set of office equipment- e.g. no more maintaining and replacing 12 printers.

How would it improve service?

The extra time freed up by these efficiencies would be reallocated to more and better service to the community, including proactive projects.

What opportunities are there for increased partnership and collaboration?

Sharing office space would spark collaboration on ideas that would benefit the city as a whole, as well as partnerships with programs that exist beyond geographic borders. The existing internship program could be expanded once there was space to house interns. If there was enough additional space, work stations could be used by visiting program and agency partners.

What impact on current programs would the move have?

All current Crime Prevention Program offerings would continue. Time gained due to efficiencies could be used on further enhancements to current offerings.

Would my neighborhood still have an assigned Crime Prevention Coordinator?

Yes, every neighborhood in Portland would continue to have a staff member assigned to them.

Would my Crime Prevention Coordinator still spend time in my neighborhood?

Yes, the CP staff would still spend an average of 50% of their time out in the community, away from their office.

How would I see a Crime Prevention Coordinator in person?

Just like now, Crime Prevention Coordinators would be available for meetings with individual community members and groups. Crime Prevention staff are always happy to meet with people in the places the community finds most convenient. In addition, the hub office would have regular office hours, making it a place where someone could drop by and speak to an on-call Crime Prevention Coordinator.

What would the rest of ONI get out of a hub?

A hub would give ONI a presence on the east side of the river, away from the downtown core. Meeting space at the hub could be used by any program at ONI, as well as ONI partners. Creating a hub office on the east side would ease crowding and storage problems at ONI's City Hall offices. Furthermore, in the event of a disaster that renders City Hall unusable, such as a major earthquake, ONI's Information and Referral Line could be set up at the hub and service could continue with minimized interruption.

What are the "enhancements" and how much are they needed?

The PowerPoint that accompanies this FAQ document refers to enhancements that would cost extra, but would optimize the outcome of a move to a hub office. These enhancements include a 1.0 FTE administrative assistant, replacing field staff's desktop computers with laptops, and allotting money to National Night Out and annual volunteer recognition.

Currently, the CP Program shares an administrative assistant with the Livability Program. The Livability Program gets 80% of her time, and Crime Prevention gets the remaining 20%. The assistant's duties are to help with annual special events National Night Out and volunteer recognition. Other administrative duties, such as ordering office supplies and printing, are performed by Information & Referral staff. A dedicated 1.0 FTE administrative assistant could perform all these duties, plus staff the reception area of the hub so that community callers got a live human on the phone immediately during business hours.

Laptop computers with wireless cards would allow the Crime Prevention Coordinators access to all of their files, no matter where they were out in the field. This would minimize trips back to the office and create more efficiency. Laptops would also allow for easier video conferencing.

Money to pay for the program's annual events, National Night Out and the volunteer recognition events, is sought every year from a pot of federal funds shared with other safety programs in the City and County. Securing the funds is cumbersome and time-consuming, costing more in personnel time for meeting attendance than the actual yield of the dollars obtained. A small amount of money in the CP budget for these events would allow the program to devote those personnel hours to something more cost-effective.

What is cost of hub?

Without the enhancements, the cost could be lower than the current costs for the program. With the enhancements, the cost would be approximately the same. If the BAC supports the idea of a hub, a detailed budget can be developed and presented at an upcoming meeting.