

The Portland Tribune

Wheeler's First Year as Mayor: Reality Bites

*By Jim Redden
January 1, 2018*

Amid challenges, Portland mayor says he's stayed focused on priorities and progress had been made addressing the city's most pressing problems.

Mayor Ted Wheeler's first year in office got off to a rocky start. But that didn't surprise him.

"I knew there would be crises; what I didn't know was the nature of them," Wheeler said in an interview looking back at his first year as mayor.

"I think our administration handled them well, and we stayed focused on our agenda, which was critical."

After winning the election with 55 percent of the vote at the May 2016 primary, Wheeler had seven months to plan his transition to succeed Mayor Charlie Hales, who pulled out of the race after initially announcing he'd seek re-election.

Early on, Wheeler announced several things he would do to fulfill his campaign promises. They included launching a national search for a police chief committed to community policing; taking control of all city bureaus while the City Council considered his first proposed budget, to overcome "silo thinking"; and assigning himself control of the Portland Housing Bureau to spearhead efforts to create more affordable housing.

Wheeler got a break on his affordable housing goal when Portland voters approved a \$285.4 million bond at the November 2016 general election to preserve and build 1,300 units of affordable housing.

But then reality intervened.

Clashes over policing

The general election also saw Republican Donald Trump win the White House, prompting ongoing protests in the famously liberal city. Those frequently degenerated into protester vandalism and clashes with the police — prompting accusations of civil rights violations that spilled into City Council meetings. Because Wheeler was in charge of the police, some activists blamed him for what they saw as heavy-handed crowd control tactics.

The 2016-17 winter also ended with a series of storms that called into question the city's ability to provide basic services like keeping the streets open and protecting the homeless. Four people froze to death, as Wheeler and Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury rushed to increase emergency shelter beds. Affordable housing bond funds were first spent, while Hales was still mayor, to buy an existing apartment complex. That controversial choice prompted Wheeler to create a lengthy process to prioritize future spending, postponing the next spending decision for a year.

Then, as 2017 was winding down, Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle threatened to move the company's Sorel headquarters out of downtown because of safety and theft problems. That reopened the divisive debate over how the city should respond to the visible homeless population downtown during the holiday shopping season.

Wheeler defended his efforts to increase housing for the homeless while improving downtown livability, in the face of protests that accused him of favoring the business community.

But through it all, Wheeler said he remained focused on the priorities he announced when he ran for mayor in 2016.

"As mayor, no matter what you do, someone is always going to say you did the wrong thing. And usually the criticism comes from both sides. You have to have a thick skin and a sense of humor to do this job," Wheeler said.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who has now served under four mayors, says he understands the challenge.

"As mayor, you have to react to everything. As a member of the council, I can focus on a short agenda and move it forward," says Fish, who has spent the past few years resolving problems with the Portland Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services, which operates the city's sewer system and stormwater management programs.

Wheeler lists city accomplishments

In a Dec. 20 open letter to Portlanders, Wheeler admitted he spent some of his first year in office reacting to developments. But he insisted that progress was made on his and the city's priorities, despite the distractions.

"My administration did not plan to spend our first months governing from one crisis to the next, but we took on each crisis as it came, all the while making progress on the issues Portlanders care about most: housing, homelessness, public safety, economic growth, environmental protection, equity, and government transparency and accountability," Wheeler wrote.

On his city website, Wheeler lists 42 accomplishments that he attributes to the City Council in 2017. Some were those he initiated, including the appointment of former Oakland Deputy Police Chief Danielle Outlaw as his new police chief, passing the Build Portland program to invest \$600 million over 20 years in neglected infrastructure, and committing with other mayors across the country to uphold the commitments made as part of the Paris Climate Accord.

Others were initiated by members of the council. They include renter protections sponsored by new Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, and approving a goal of creating 2,000 units of supportive housing, pushed by Fish. Those units will be in addition to thousands of other affordable units in new projects that were in the works before Wheeler took office.

Some of the other accomplishments were pushed by other elected officials. They include passing a ballot measure to increase the independence of the City Auditor's Office, which was sponsored by City Auditor Mary Hull Caballero; and investing a record \$28 million in the Joint Office of Homeless Services, which Kafoury aggressively sought

"The strong partnerships we've established among the council and between bureaus, combined with our sustained focus on the core functions of our city government, have led to progress in 2017 and laid the groundwork for a successful 2018," Wheeler wrote in his open letter.

Shuffling bureau leaders

Left unsaid were major personnel changes at the top of three troubled agencies assigned to Commissioner Amanda Fritz. An internal personnel survey had revealed morale problems at the Bureau of Development Services. Audits had found management and reporting problems at the Bureau of Emergency Communications and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

The head of the 911 center retired shortly before Wheeler took the oversight responsibility away from Fritz. Eudaly replaced the directors of the development services bureau and neighborhood involvement office after Wheeler reassigned those to her.

As Wheeler begins his second year in office, things are going more peacefully. The wave of anti-Trump protests has slowed and the first winter storm was not nearly as bad as those that crippled the city during last year's holidays. Protesters have not shut down the City Council since it adopted a new policy for barring repeated disrupters from future meetings. And the current bureau assignments do not seem likely to change until 2019, when the council will have at least one new member following Commissioner Dan Saltzman's decision not to seek reelection next year.

"2018 is going to be another exciting year. We just don't know how yet," Wheeler said.

What's ahead in 2018

Looking forward, Wheeler said Portland is a great city and is becoming even better as it grows. But he sees issues that must be addressed this year:

- The homeless crisis will continue to be Wheeler's top priority in 2018. He supports extending the renter protections sponsored by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly and is considering a number of potential revenue sources to fund the mental health and addiction services that chronically homeless people need to stay in permanent housing. "Funding permanent supportive housing and street-level mental health and addiction services is essential to reduce the number of people living on the streets," said Wheeler, who is not yet ready to discuss the potential revenue sources publicly.
- Improving streets and adding sidewalks in East Portland is another priority. "East Portland has been neglected for far too long," said Wheeler, who is not ready to publicly discuss those funding options, either.
- Redeveloping the former U.S. Postal Service site, part of what's being called the Broadway Corridor, is an economic development priority. Prosper Portland, formally called the Portland Development Commission, solicited development proposals in early November that will be publicly presented and discussed within the next six months. "There is global interest in the project," Wheeler said.
- Appointing permanent directors at three bureaus under Wheeler's control will stabilize them. They are the Bureau of Emergency Communications, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, and the Portland Housing Bureau. "We have a good leadership team in place and will soon complete it," Wheeler said.

Find out more

You can read Wheeler's letter at tinyurl.com/ycbj87qk.

You can find Wheeler's list accomplishments tinyurl.com/y8d5xtd3.

City Hall Update: Critics Continue Comp Plan Challenges

*By Jim Redden
January 1, 2018*

Plus, first Central City plan hearing set and new spending was not needed for the first snowstorm of the year.

The Multnomah Neighborhood Association last Tuesday appealed the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development's rejection of their challenges to the update of Portland's Comprehensive Plan.

The update was approved by the City Council last year and must be acknowledged by the state. The neighborhood association had challenged the public involvement process and justification for increasing density in 40 percent of Portland's single-family neighborhoods and increasing the density in Multnomah Village.

The appeals will be considered by the appointed Land Conservation and Development Commission that oversees the department, which might take place at its March 15-16 meeting in Salem. Anticipating the challenges and appeal, the City Council has postponed the effective date of the Comprehensive Plan update to May 24.

Central City plan hearing set

Although the Comprehensive Plan update won't take effect for nearly six months at the earliest, the City Council is continuing to work on its first amendment.

Central City Plan 2035 is intended to guide development in the urban core, including downtown and the inner east side, over the next 20 years.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, which is preparing Central City Plan 2035, announced last week that the council will begin finalizing it at a Jan. 18 public hearing. Amendments to be considered are posted online. Staff will publish a final report on them by Jan. 5.

To learn more and read the amendments, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y7c4p9om>.

New spending not needed for first snowstorm

The Christmas Day snowstorm was not serious enough for the Portland Bureau of Transportation to tap its additional snow and ice removal resources.

After the series of winter storms that repeatedly shut down the city at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017, the City Council bought more snow plows, authorized the use of salt on especially hazardous roads, contracted with private businesses for additional services, and entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Seattle for its help if needed.

Although conditions were slippery enough that some roads were closed on Dec. 25 and 26, PBOT mostly spread traditional deicer with its existing trucks.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

A Gateway to Greater Revitalization

*By Chuck Slothower
December 29, 2017*

On a sunny day in May 2016, city leaders gathered at the future site of Gateway Discovery Park to celebrate breaking ground on a new community asset in the long-neglected East Portland neighborhood. The 3.2-acre park, now under construction, will offer amenities including a plaza, a skate park, lawn space and performance space. It is slated to open in the spring.

An adjacent mixed-use building from Gerding Edlen and Human Solutions will bring retail, office and apartment space.

The projects are among the most visible improvements in Gateway, where an urban renewal area was established in 2001. The URA expires in 2022. As time runs short to fund improvements in the area, city officials are working to invest the urban-renewal dollars in ways that lay the groundwork for later private development.

Public infrastructure is expected to come online in 2018. The park's opening will be followed by a Portland Bureau of Transportation streetscape improvement project on Northeast Halsey and Weidler streets from 102nd Avenue to 114th Avenue. Construction on the streetscape project is anticipated to begin in spring or summer 2018.

Susan Kuhn, Prosper Portland's project manager for the Gateway area, said she's noticed a recent uptick in calls from developers who are interested in opportunities in the Gateway area.

Real estate activity has also accelerated, said Fred Sanchez, a commercial broker in the area for more than three decades.

"The last two, three years, it has been absolutely the best years that we have ever seen, and we've been doing this since 1979," he said.

Sanchez's Realty Property has a waiting list for space at 111th Square, a shopping center at Northeast 111th Avenue and Halsey Street. All 16 of the center's retail spaces are occupied.

"It is the hottest demand for rental spaces that we've ever seen," Sanchez said. "If I had another space for 16 businesses, I'd be able to fill it."

Gateway is home to a diverse community of people of color and recent immigrants and refugees. As with other Portland neighborhoods, residents fear being displaced by gentrification.

Prosper Portland's Gateway Action Plan, adopted in 2016, calls for \$20 million in investments in the urban renewal area, which encompasses 658 acres. City officials are eager to support small businesses along the Halsey and Weidler corridors.

Officials at the economic development agency point to Lents as a model, where three towering construction cranes are at work on various projects.

"I think there's more coming to the Gateway area," Kuhn said. "Obviously, in Lents there's been a tremendous amount, and we'll see more of that in Gateway too."

The Gerding Edlen-Human Solutions project at Northeast 106th Avenue and Halsey Street will feature 75 apartments, with 35 at market rate and 40 affordable to families at or below 60 percent of area median income. Construction is expected to start in 2019.

In the design by Holst Architecture, ground-floor retail space will front the park's plaza and Halsey Street. The second floor will host commercial space.

Another multifamily project has been proposed at 9747 N.E. Glisan Street. MWA Architects recently requested a pre-application conference for a four-story, 161-unit workforce housing development with 3,500 square feet of residential and community space.

The owner, Gateway Affordable LLC, is an entity connected to Walsh Construction executives John Wied, Robert Walsh and Matt Leeding. A spokeswoman for Walsh Construction said the executives were out for the holidays and not available to comment.

Officials with Gateway Baptist Church, at 13300 N.E. San Rafael Street, have sought city approval of a 2,717-square-foot addition. Myhre Group Architects is designing the project.

An urban winery, with a tasting room and production facilities, has been proposed for 10414 N.E. Halsey St. Currently, the small two-story building is a hardware store. Minor upgrades to the upstairs apartment are planned.

David Douglas School District also owns several undeveloped parcels in the URA, including land that formerly belonged to an Elks lodge. The Elks organization sold the property to the school district in 2015 for \$3.8 million.

Recent projects in the neighborhood include Russellville Commons, Glisan Commons and the Oregon Clinic.

Gateway has plentiful retail, with Fred Meyer and WinCo Foods serving as anchors. It's also well served by transit, with easy access from interstates 205 and 84 and three MAX light-rail lines.

However, the area has infrastructure challenges too, including limited infrastructure for bicyclists and areas with no sidewalks. The Portland Bureau of Transportation is planning a batch of projects known collectively as "Gateway to Opportunity" to address those issues. The Halsey-Weidler streetscape project is expected to wrap up in winter 2018-19. Other projects include overcrossing improvements at I-205 and Halsey Street, reconfiguration of Northeast 102nd Avenue from Weidler Street to Fremont Street and reconfiguration of Glisan Street from 102nd Avenue to the city limits. PBOT is also focusing on connections for walking and bicycling across I-205 and I-84.

Prosper Portland also is looking to implement the Gateway Action Plan to spur private investment. Major aspects of the action plan include:

- backing additional mixed-income housing projects in the Gateway area,
- improving circulation near Gateway Transit Center,
- lowering floor-area ratio requirements to encourage private development, and
- creating a bike connection project (led by PBOT) to provide consistent bike transportation along Tillamook, Halsey, Oregon and Pacific streets.

Prosper Portland has made other small investments, including a façade improvement program that has freshened appearances at businesses along Halsey and Weidler streets. The agency also controls a \$5 million opportunity fund to be used on Gateway area projects.

Sanchez said he'll be watching to make sure local agencies maintain the improvements they make. If so, he said, "I'm very optimistic about the future for the area."

OPB

Supporters Want To Rename A Portland Street For Harvey Milk — And Send A Message

*By Anna Griffin
December 29, 2017*

When the movie "Milk" reached theaters in the West African country of Togo a few years ago, Jean Pierre Nugloze made sure to go.

Though several decades and continents apart, the story of slain San Francisco activist Harvey Milk, as played by actor Sean Penn, felt very personal. Nugloze was openly gay in a country where homosexuality remains illegal.

“I don’t know how to say it,” Nugloze said. “It was very emotional, because I am a gay man and was a gay activist too.”

Today, Nugloze sells colorful African art, clothing and bags out of a small store on Portland’s Southwest Stark Street. It’s part of a 13-block stretch where a coalition of community groups want to rename to honor Harvey Milk.

Advocates of the renaming say it will send a message to members of the LGTBQ community in Portland – and other parts of the state and nation.

“No matter how progressive Portland the city may be, it is a very small piece of the Oregon pie,” said Lisa Schroeder, the chef and owner of Mother’s Bistro, a restaurant on Southwest Stark.

“There are many youths that feel disenfranchised even today. And to be able to look up to a street named after someone who was gay, openly gay, it kind of gives them something to aspire toward.”

It’s also a chance to provide a history lesson for a generation that may not understand how rapidly the country’s attitude toward gays and lesbians has progressed.

“For millennials who grew up in Portland or maybe in the Bay Area, they may have grown up with no idea of what the world was like,” said Tyler TerMeer, executive director of the nonprofit Cascade AIDS Project.

“Twenty-five years ago, it was a different place completely. Many of us waited anxiously to see the first gay kiss on television Honoring Harvey Milk is a chance to talk about how far we’ve come and what’s left to do.”

The actual renaming idea came from former Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts. She was in San Diego with friends a few years ago to speak at the city’s annual Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast. Schroeder said Roberts and friends stopped to take a picture under a sign marking Harvey Milk Street.

“A light bulb went off in their heads and they said, ‘You know, Portland, we have streets named after great figures. But where is the LGBTQ leader of the community?’” Schroeder said.

Street re-namings don’t happen often in Portland – and when they do, they’re usually complicated by issues of race, class and politics.

Back when city leaders worked to rename Union Avenue after Martin Luther King Jr. in the late 1980s, more than 37,000 people signed a petition in opposition.

The quest to name a city street after labor organizer Cesar Chavez almost a decade ago took several years to achieve. Business owners on Interstate Avenue and Southwest Fourth Street objected to changing their addresses.

The City Council eventually agreed to rename 39th Avenue after Chavez but only after months of squabbling that culminated in Mayor Tom Potter storming out of a meeting and declaring himself “irrelevant.”

Milk Street organizers picked this part of Stark Street because it was once the heart of Portland’s gay nightlife. They’ve heard little pushback to the idea of renaming a road that’s already named

for someone else: Benjamin Stark was one of Portland's founding fathers; he was also an unapologetic racist who advocated for slavery.

Supporters have, however, faced questions about their choice.

"We've heard, 'Why not pick someone from a community of color? Why not pick a transgender activist from early on? Why not pick someone who is a native Oregonian?'" TerMeer said. "Why pick this white, gay man from San Francisco?"

The short answer: City rules about who can be honored with a street name are quite strict.

"One of the rules is that the person has to have been dead for five years," Schroeder said. "The person also has to be a household name."

Name change supporters say they hope to put up reminders of other, less famous LGBTQ pioneers along Stark Street, perhaps with plaques or benches.

And while Milk is something of a compromise, they say he's a fitting one. He was one of the first openly gay people elected to public office in the United States, and a champion for the notion that being out and proud was the best way to overcome bigotry.

He helped successfully kill California's Proposition 6, which would have barred gay people from working as school teachers, and helped pass a San Francisco city ordinance ensuring equal rights for gays and lesbians.

The Harvey Milk Blvd sign is shown during a dedication event for a new Salt Lake City street named for pioneering gay leader Harvey Milk Saturday, May 14, 2016, in Salt Lake City.

The Harvey Milk Blvd sign is shown during a dedication event for a new Salt Lake City street named for pioneering gay leader Harvey Milk Saturday, May 14, 2016, in Salt Lake City.

Nine days before he was assassinated in 1978, Milk made a tape with instructions that it be played only after he died.

"I'd love to see every gay doctor come out, every gay lawyer, every gay judge, every gay bureaucrat, every gay architect come out and stand up and let the world know," Milk said in the tape.

"That would do more to end prejudice overnight than anybody can ever imagine."

Portland city rules provide two ways to start the process to re-name a street: You can collect a percent of property owners to say yes or collect 2,500 signatures.

Milk Street organizers are going the signature route. They haven't been able to get that critical mass of property owners to agree.

"The problem is that renaming a street involves so many logistical hassles for business owners," said Greg Goodman, whose family company owns buildings, parking lots and garages downtown. "It's just time-consuming and costly."

Those costs include changing business cards and signs. Goodman said he's just against most street re-namings on general principle.

"Philosophically, I have no problem with Harvey Milk," he said. "But I would look at it as, 'How do I do a park? How do I do a statue? How do I pay some other tribute to somebody that deserves a tribute?'"

Still, Goodman said he won't actively fight the effort. After all, arguing against honoring an assassinated gay rights leader in super-progressive Portland is, after all, a risky political fight.

Signature gathering could start this winter. The City Council could vote by summer.

Back on Stark Street, in his small, colorful boutique, Jean Pierre Nugloze can't wait. He doesn't care that Harvey Milk wasn't from Oregon.

"This idea means a lot to me, because people have fought for gay freedom, so this gives them respect," he said. "This sends a message."

A few years ago, back home, Nugloze could have been thrown in jail for being a gay man. Soon, he may own a business on a street named after one.