

The Oregonian

Does Portland Need More Police?

The Oregonian Editorial Board

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Since she first outlined her agency budget earlier this year, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler have pushed for adding 93 additional police officers to the force.

Some Portlanders lauded the request, saying that city leaders should be more focus on public safety. Others were upset by the plan, saying the bureau needs better training rather than more bodies. They pointed to poor relations between Portland police and communities of color. They also held up the recent fatal shooting of a man who appeared to be in a mentally health crisis in a homeless shelter as evidence that the agency has yet to make improvements they promised in a settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

On Monday, Wheeler announced he will pay for more officers. But his plan, which he called more "reasonable" and "pragmatic" only sets aside money for 58 new positions. Of those new officers, 52 would be for patrol, four for the training division and two for the Behavioral Health Unit, which responds to calls involving the mentally ill.

The mayor said the increase will help Portland Police respond more quickly to 911 calls, reduce overtime costs and get officers "out of their cars" and "into their communities."

Wheeler Proposes Longer Timeline for Portland Seismic Upgrade Mandate

By Elliot Njus

May 2, 2018

Mayor Ted Wheeler wants to give owners of earthquake-prone buildings more time to make costly upgrades.

The Portland City Council will consider a resolution next week that calls for seismic retrofits in all unreinforced masonry buildings, which are particularly susceptible to collapsing in quakes.

But Wheeler has proposed giving building owners 20 years, citing the enormous cost of the upgrades. That would be a decade longer than the due dates proposed by an advisory committee in December.

The committee had recommended giving the highest-risk buildings — critical infrastructure and high-occupancy buildings like schools or theaters — 10 years to meet the mandates, while other buildings would have 10 years for some fixes and 15 for others.

Wheeler also proposed to eliminate for most unreinforced masonry buildings a requirement that floors be securely fastened to walls, a measure intended to reduce the risk of building collapse.

The map shows buildings that are believed to be of "unreinforced masonry," construction or URM, according to the city. However, the city warned users that the map's accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Building owners have balked at the looming mandate. Seismic upgrades typically cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they can top \$1 million for large buildings. They often require the building to be vacated during construction, displacing businesses or residents while cutting off revenue to the building owner.

Some building owners have already encountered difficulty refinancing because of the possibility the retrofit mandate would diminish the value of the building, said Kyle Chisek, a Wheeler aide. Others have sold in part because they won't be able to afford the upgrades, displacing business or residents.

Preservationists worried the mandate could prompt the demolition and redevelopment of historic buildings — although those concerns are tempered by worry the buildings could just as easily be destroyed in an eventual earthquake.

The 20-year timeline would allow the city to develop financial incentives to offset the cost of the upgrades, Chisek said. The city also plans to ask the state Legislature to adopt its own financial incentives.

"This isn't just an issue for Portland," he said. "It's an issue for cities across the state."

Experts say a major earthquake and tsunami is inevitable along the Cascadia subduction zone, a fault that lies off the Pacific coast. A worst-case quake could kill thousands and leave hundreds of thousands homeless.

Despite the grim numbers in the report, there are things you can do to prepare.

But even a more minor quake could cause brittle unreinforced masonry buildings to crumble.

Portland has identified some 1,800 unreinforced masonry buildings, and less than 15 percent have been fully or partially retrofitted.

Portland Paid \$165K Severance to Bureaucrat Fired for Budget Reasons

*By Gordon Friedman
May 2, 2018*

The city of Portland paid Bryant Enge, the ousted director of the now-dissolved Bureau of Internal Business Services, more than \$165,000 when he was fired in March.

The Oregonian/OregonLive received a copy of Enge's severance agreement Wednesday in response to a public records request.

City chief administrative officer Tom Rinehart announced to elected officials March 28 that he had eliminated Enge's bureau, saying it was for budgetary reasons.

"The fact that we are now in our fifth straight year at a record level of revenue collection and yet are still facing budget cuts is a clear sign that, as a city, we need to re-think how we are organized, what services we will be able to continue, what processes we change, and what services we stop doing completely," Rinehart wrote.

He said the bureau's divisions, which oversee city buildings, vehicles, printing, and risk management, would be transferred to other bureaus along with their staff.

The only person who apparently lost their job in the reorganization: Enge, who became director of the obscure bureau in 2012.

Hours after Rinehart's announcement that the Bureau of Business Services had been rendered kaput, Enge emailed city elected officials and bureau leaders saying he "decided to leave the city."

Two weeks later, Enge signed the severance agreement guaranteeing him a \$165,797 payout. He is also eligible for city payment of his medical insurance premiums, the severance agreement shows.

Jen Clodius, spokeswoman for the city Office of Management and Finance, which Rinehart is in charge of, acknowledged Wednesday that dissolving the Bureau of Internal Business Services was for budgetary reasons, but said in an email "it's in terms of saving money over decades, not just this year."

The city owed Enge nothing, according to his employment agreement. The document states Enge was guaranteed a severance payment worth at least six months' salary only if fired without cause during his first three years of service.

It is city policy to pay ousted bureau directors six months to one year of salary if fired within the first three years, as a way to shield them from changing political tides. But city leaders have made it a practice to pay fired bureau leaders even after their three-year work anniversaries.

Enge's payment falls closely behind other ousted bureau directors like Anna Kanwit of the Portland Housing Bureau, who was paid \$195,000 to step down last November, and Paul Scarlet of the Bureau of Development Services, who got \$182,000 last April.

The Portland Tribune

Portland Home Energy Scores Not So Hot

By Jessie Darland

May 3, 2018

'Energy hog' older homes push down ratings in city's new energy-saving mandate.

Portland has led the nation with environmental initiatives to cut carbon emissions and promote recycling and bicycling, but our old homes aren't exactly on board with this whole "green" thing.

The city of Portland and the nonprofit Enhabit recently released data about the first Home Energy Scores since Portland made the energy reports mandatory in January before a home may be offered for sale. Early numbers reveal that our housing stock's energy efficiency is only so-so.

According to Enhabit, of the first 200 homes it has assessed, the average score was 4.1 on a 10-point scale (1 signifies an energy hog and 10 is an ultra-efficient home). The city's data, culled from a mix of contractors, showed a slightly higher average score of 4.4 on the first 2,036 homes assessed.

The national average and most common Home Energy Score is 5, according to Enhabit.

The nonprofit is finding that Portland is nearly a whole point lower, showing there is work to be done to make homes here more energy-efficient.

Under the new mandate — the most extensive in the nation — sellers must hire a home energy assessor to prepare a Home Energy Score that's made available to prospective buyers. That provides a clue about future energy bills, akin to a miles-per-gallon sticker on a car for sale.

"People now have access to good information about how homes actually use energy," said Peter Kernan, Enhabit Home Energy Score adviser.

Low scores often indicate that home energy costs are higher than they could be. Houses that receive a score of 5 or less will get a list of recommended improvements.

Homeowners can use the lists to boost the score, increasing their home's energy efficiency and cutting future energy bills. Collectively, that will lower the city's overall carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

Establishing the mandate was a longstanding goal in the city/county Climate Action Plan. Enhabit estimates that if homeowners all around the country received a Home Energy Score and decided to make upgrades, total carbon emissions in the U.S. could be cut by 20 percent.

Low-key enforcement

So far, Portlanders have been fairly compliant in getting the Home Energy Scores done before putting their houses up for sale. According to Andria Jacob, senior program manager for Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, compliance rates are at about 60 percent right now and going up.

"This is really, really good for something this new, when we aren't doing hard-core enforcement," Jacob said. If rates do go down, which she doesn't expect, the city may start sending letters or fining people.

Scores are set by a certified home assessor based on the physical characteristics of the home, not by how much energy the current homeowner actually uses.

"We'd like folks to get the message that there are opportunities for people in Portland buying older, pre-code homes to improve energy efficiency," Jacob said. "It's possible to get to a higher score by making some investments. Some of these will have long-term payback in bringing down energy costs over time. Hopefully the next step is making these improvements."

Old-age problem

The main reason Portland is scoring below average is likely the age of homes in the area. According to Enhabit, most houses in Portland were built before energy codes were established. Older homes are often much less energy efficient due to their lack of insulation — one of the biggest things suggested to homeowners to improve after getting their scores.

"Insulation is always seen as this holy grail of energy efficiency," Kernan said. Enhabit assesses homes and provides homeowners certified scores after 60 to 90 minutes. They also help homeowners find contractors to do the work that needs to be done.

Other common recommendations are improving duct work and upgrading to high-efficiency heating systems, which can cut costs down to a third of the original.

Though some recommendations may seem like a large investment, Kernan says they're going to pay off in the long run.

Enhabit only suggests improvements if the costs can be recovered, via lower utility bills, during a 10-year payback period. Improvements that can take longer than 10 years to pay off, such as replacing windows, aren't typically suggested.

Realtor challenges

Lynae Forbes, president and principal broker at Hasson Company Realtors, said her industry is still facing some challenges with the new mandate. From what she's heard from her brokers, large houses are prone to low scores. Although it's not really affecting the value of the homes, the score is sometimes used by buyers as a negotiating tool after home inspections — something Realtors feared before the mandate went into effect.

Hasson agents are working to educate sellers, Forbes said, but she's noticed many sellers in the area aren't yet complying.

Realtors are experiencing a problem due to a sort of technical glitch on listing sites such as Zillow. According to Forbes, the site doesn't allow links in order to avoid personal marketing, meaning sellers can't link their Home Energy Score on these sites and are thus unable to comply with the city's mandate.

"I'm hopeful they'll work that out," Forbes said. "We've gone to multiple listing systems saying this is a problem for us."

Portland Campaign to Tax Large Corporations to Address Climate Change Gets Go-Ahead

By Steve Law

May 2, 2018

A local judge rules the Portland Clean Energy Fund initiative, opposed by business, is constitutional.

A campaign to tax large corporations in Portland to fund clean-energy projects got a crucial go-ahead Monday from a local judge, clearing activists to prepare signature-gathering for the so-called Portland Clean Energy Fund initiative.

Multnomah Circuit Judge Benjamin Souede ruled April 30 that the measure is constitutional, rejecting efforts by business interests to prevent the campaign from going forward.

"We are good to go, and the measure is constitutional, and we are ready to hit the streets on signature collection," said Damon Motz-Storey, spokesman for the campaign.

Technically, they aren't quite good to go until the judge issues a revised ballot title — the wording that will appear before voters and is needed before petitions can be circulated. However, backers were confident the ballot title would be finalized by the end of day Wednesday, May 2, and would not be substantially changed.

The ballot initiative would levy a 1 percent surcharge based on the sales of retailers and service companies with more than \$1 billion in total sales and \$500,000 in Portland sales, with money going to pay for solar panels, home weatherization, job training and other projects to reduce carbon emissions. Sales of food, medicines and health care would be exempted. Backers estimate the measure will raise about \$30 million a year. One campaign activist estimated the measure would affect approximately 122 companies.

The steering committee for the campaign includes leaders of 10 prominent environmental advocacy groups and nonprofits representing communities of color. Those are 350.PDX, the NAACP, APANO, Oregon Sierra Club, Coalition of Communities of Color, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, NAYA, Portland Audubon, Columbia Riverkeeper and Verde.

The coalition needs to gather nearly 35,000 valid initiative petition signatures by July 6 to qualify for the city's November ballot.

Activists could begin gathering signatures this weekend or early next week, Motz-Storey said. The sponsoring groups have volunteers waiting to proceed with petition clipboards, and a professional signature-gathering firm also will be hired, he said.

Veteran political consultant Paige Richardson will be managing the campaign, on a volunteer basis, he said.

At a time when the Donald Trump administration is reversing federal efforts to reduce carbon emissions, this initiative will continue Portland's leadership in municipal efforts to address climate change, Motz-Storey said.

But the powerful Portland Business Alliance, among other private sector groups, is sharply opposed to the measure and could mount a formidable opposition campaign.

For more information on the campaign: portlandcleanenergyfund.com

The Portland Mercury

Portland's Run Out of Space to Store Items Collected From Homeless Camp Cleanups

By Alex Zielinski

May 2, 2018

The city has run out of room to store the items it's collected during homeless camp sweeps.

For the past four years, these various belongings—anything from sleeping bags to ID cards—have generally been collected from city or state-owned property by cleanup staff and taken to a 1,010-square-foot, city-owned facility off SW Barbur Blvd., some seven miles southwest of the city center. These items are then held in the for at least 30 days, then thrown away. People hoping to retrieve their swiped items before then must call and make an appointment to collect their belongings at the distant facility.

But, according to the Office of Management and Finance (OMF) staff, who oversee the citywide cleanup system, roughly 90 percent of all items are never retrieved—leaving the warehouse consistently filled to the brim with recovered belongings.

That's why Portland City Council voted this morning to allow OMF to purchase a new storage warehouse in Northeast Portland that's more than four times bigger than the Barbur facility.

Located just north of NE Sandy on NE 24th, the new facility boast 4,300 square feet and high ceilings, an apparent improvement from the current spot. The city will pay \$72,000 to lease the new facility for two years, a stark contrast from the small cost of running the current city-owned building.

At the council meeting, OMF staff said the current facility's distance from downtown and the east side (where most of these items are originally collected) is the main reason so few possessions are ever picked up. Staff also pointed to a new policy requiring cleanup crews to collect soiled items (only excluding items doused in some kind of hazardous substance) as reason they've lost storage space. A more central location would, ideally, shrink this growing cache—benefitting

both the city and people wanting their stuff back. Which makes sense. But it doesn't exactly explain why the new Northeast spot needs to be four times larger than its predecessor.

A quick look at the county's 2017 survey of Portland's homeless population shows the number of people sleeping outside has plummeted in the past few years (a reversal we can link to the \$20 million boost in homeless program funding we saw in 2016).

If this move works the way OMF expects it to, staff should hopefully see a decrease in the amount of possessions the city's throwing out.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Old Town Chinatown Block May Be Redeveloped

By Chuck Slothower

May 2, 2018

Prosper Portland is preparing to take over approximately three-quarters of a block in Old Town Chinatown, with long-term plans to offer the property for redevelopment.

The site is Block 25, a 0.62-acre parcel that has been used for parking by NW Natural. The utility company is decamping from its building nearby, One Pacific Square, for a new office at 250 S.W. Taylor St.

Prosper Portland plans to move toward issuing a request for proposals. The agency will reach out to the Old Town Chinatown community, spokesman Shawn Uhlman said.

“We’re looking at a robust process over the summer months and the early fall,” he said. “That could help define what goes into an RFP – probably, it will end up being an RFP at this point. That, I would assume, would probably be in late fall.”

Block 25 is bounded by Northwest Third and Fourth avenues and Flanders and Glisan streets. The block is northwest of Lan Su Chinese Garden. NW Natural was given the right to use 116 parking spaces on the lot as part of the utility’s 99-year lease agreement with the city for construction of the Chinese Garden in 1995.

The parking agreement will terminate 60 days after NW Natural vacates, which is anticipated sometime in 2020. The city gets revenue from evening and nighttime parking on the block.

Two other properties on the block are owned by Blanchet House – a charity group that offers meals and housing. No changes are planned to those properties for now.

“We’ll certainly track what their plans are as we’re thinking about redevelopment, and I’m sure it will come up in the community as well,” said Lisa Abuaf, development manager for Prosper Portland.

At an April 11 meeting, Prosper Portland approved an intergovernmental agreement to accept conveyance of the property from the city’s Office of Management & Finance.

Future redevelopment of the block is seen as part of an action plan to revitalize Old Town Chinatown. Earlier portions of the plan included redevelopment of the Society Hotel and Block 8L at Northwest First Avenue and Davis Street.

The area is part of a historic district with design guidelines required for any redevelopment.

The Portland Observer

Support for Housing, Police

May 2, 2018

Mayor sets priorities with new budget

Mayor Ted Wheeler announced his proposed general fund budget of \$553 million Monday, which included increased monies for homeless services, affordable housing, police officers, and new small business support.

With the backing of Portland Business Alliance, Wheeler has proposed an increase in the city's Business License Tax rate from 2.2 percent to 2.6 percent, which would add an estimated \$15.3 million to the annual budget. Also proposed was an expanded tax exemption for small business owners to lighten their tax obligation.

The proposed budget includes \$31.2 million to the Joint Office Homelessness services, a record breaking amount and 10 percent increase from last year, as well as funding for current and future affordable housing units being constructed.

"We understand that together we can do more to help people experiencing homelessness find the shelter and services they need to get off the street, and that the ultimate goal is to move people out of shelters and into housing," Wheeler said in a press release Monday.

The proposed budget would authorize the Portland Police Bureau to hire 52 additional officers and enhance the Behavioral Health Unit of the bureau, among other measures.

Wheeler cited a need for public safety officers to shorten response times for 911 calls, decrease an over reliance on police overtime, police officer fatigue, and a need to pivot to a more community-centered policing model.

Adding more revenue to the police budget was praised Monday by Portland Police Association President Daryl Turner, who called it a "move in the right direction." But the activist group Critical Resistance rejected the plan, saying it would be better to "divert funding away from policing and into community resources," like mental health and housing.

In a statement released Tuesday, Critical Resistance said it will convene with other advocacy groups, like Care Not Cops and Don't Shoot Portland Saturday at Hughes Memorial United Methodist Church in northeast Portland to discuss community safety needs.

The proposed city budget will be decided later this spring after a public comment period and consideration and approval by the entire city council.