

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales nominates developer Mark Edlen to urban renewal board

By Andrew Theen
08/21/2014

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales is turning to another big name in the Rose City's business world to serve on the urban renewal agency's board.

Hales is nominating developer Mark Edlen to a three-year term on the Portland Development Commission's board. Edlen, the 61-year-old co-founder and CEO of Portland development giant Gerding Edlen Development, said Wednesday afternoon he is honored by the announcement and feels a "sense of obligation" to give back to the city.

"I hope to be able to add value around finance and development," Edlen said. "That's my background."

Edlen marks the second appointment to the five-person board for Hales in 2014, the first being Tom Kelly, the president of Portland remodeling company Neil Kelly. Edlen replaces outgoing board chair Scott Andrews. Kelly is the current board chair.

The PDC board approves the purchase and sale of property owned by the urban renewal agency and other financial deals associated with tax increment funds generated by urban renewal debt.

Edlen said Hales approached him with the idea of joining the board at Andrews' going away party earlier this summer. The request, Edlen said, was unexpected.

Gerding Edlen Development was founded 18 years ago and has spearheaded \$5 billion in real estate projects nationally, according to the company's website. Sustainable development projects are the company's bread and butter, Edlen said. The company has developed 13 projects achieving LEED Platinum status and 45 developments achieving Gold status for sustainability practices.

"Mark is one of the smartest, most innovative individuals working in the real estate development industry," Hales said in a release. "His years of experience creating great urban places coupled with his passion for the city make him the ideal candidate to serve."

Edlen is no stranger to doing business with PDC. He estimated the company has done at least half a dozen developments with PDC.

A Gerding Edlen affiliate company owes more than \$8 million to PDC as part of a loan package to redevelop the Pearl District headquarters of Vestas Wind Systems. Edlen said the loan repayment isn't due for 15 years.

Hales said he hopes to redirect PDC away from its mission of job creation and back toward "place making."

Edlen said he "loves place making," saying that is what his firm does. The developer behind such high profile Portland projects as the Brewery Blocks in Northwest Portland, Edlen said he believes Portland's planning and design review process help make projects better. He said developments have a 100-200 year life and need to blend into the surrounding community.

The board is typically filled with developers and other industry insiders. Edlen pledged to recuse himself from any discussion and votes on projects his firm may be involved in.

The City Council still needs to confirm Edlen's appointment.

Portland investigates whistleblower complaint against assistant fire marshal involving party permit at downtown sex club

By Andrew Theen
08/20/2014

Portland is investigating a complaint filed last week claiming an assistant fire marshal allowed a downtown sex club to host an anniversary party in late June even after a safety inspector denied the club a special events permit.

Willamette Week first reported the investigation and incident involving Assistant Fire Marshal Doug Jones.

Anna Kanwit, Human Resources Bureau director, confirmed her bureau is investigating the incident outlined in the story from WWeek's Nigel Jaquiss.

The city's Fire Bureau denied a permit for a June anniversary party at Club Sesso, according to Willamette Week, citing a construction project already underway at the club's historic building in downtown Portland. But Jones reportedly overruled the fire inspector.

A message at the club seeking comment was not immediately returned.

Willamette Week's story includes transcripts from a conversation between Jones and the manager of porn star Ron Jeremy's downtown club.

Kanwit said the investigation hasn't begun in earnest, as her bureau hasn't interviewed the whistleblower who filed the complaint with the city Ombudsman office last week.

"I don't know enough to refute or confirm much," Kanwit said.

Jeremy, the porn star, opened Club Sesso in 2009 at a historic building at 824 S.W. First Ave.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman declined to comment on the story citing an ongoing human resources investigation.

Officials in Saltzman's office said when a building has an open construction permit filed with the city, the fire bureau is attempting to avoid issuing concurrent special event permits out of safety concerns.

The Portland Tribune

Want to share that ride? Not so fast, city says

By Stefanie Donahue
08/21/2014

Officials want more time to consider allowing mobile apps linking riders, drivers

Mobile ride-hailing applications such as Uber, Lyft and Sidecar are getting rave reviews from users in cities across the globe.

But Uber drivers are not navigating the streets of Portland just yet.

Portland is the largest U.S. city without the service, despite the company's efforts to drum up public support here. Already the Uber Portland Twitter account has more than 1,600 followers — and people are talking. Just look up the hashtag #wewantuberpx or #pdxneedsuber.

But for city officials, it is not as easy as hitting "follow" to voice their approval.

With just 460 taxicabs legally permitted by the city to provide rides for hire, and costly penalties in place for nonlaw-abiding drivers, Portland officials have opted to take their time to consider adding more competition into the mix. They could eventually allow, but not exclusively, companies like Uber to legally operate in the Rose City.

"This discussion has just started," says Dylan Rivera, spokesman for the Portland Bureau of Transportation, calling it an "opportunity to take a thoughtful look at our regulation."

He emphasizes it will take months, not weeks.

While Rivera says change is not imminent, he thinks "it is highly likely (the city) can accommodate more competitors."

San Francisco's Uber is just one of a handful of smartphone apps available on the market that connect users looking for a ride with company-authorized drivers in the area. In the past five years it has expanded to more than 90 cities in the United States, including Eugene, Salem and Vancouver, Wash.

Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick and Portland's Private-for-Hire Transportation Board of Review are looking at the ridesharing services safety, customer service, disability access, limits on the number of permitted taxicabs and treatment of drivers.

At the end of the day, "everyone needs to play by the same rules," Rivera says.

But Uber doesn't want to wait months.

Current regulations do not keep to pace with innovation, says Uber spokesperson Eva Behrend. She says the company has worked with cities across the country to provide its services. Many cities, including some near Portland, are trying to determine the future and legality of Uber's services. After months of public debate, the Seattle City Council voted last July to legalize Uber and similar applications to operate in the city with no caps on the number of drivers.

Within the Rose City

Uber representatives came to Portland's Private-for-Hire Transportation Board of Review last September. They pointed to what they called barriers in the city code, which they said hindered operation of one of their high-end services called Uber Black that offers users a ride in an executive sedan, driven by a licensed chauffeur.

The company was critical of Portland's executive sedan and limousine regulations that require a rider to make a reservation at least one hour in advance of the trip. They also wanted to see changes made to what qualifies as an executive sedan or limousine and their requirement to charge 35 percent above existing taxicab fare.

Frank Dufay, the city's regulatory division manager and member of the Private-for-Hire Transportation Board of Review, says following Uber's visit, the board voted unanimously to maintain existing regulations and nothing went to City Council.

The city has nothing against mobile applications, he says. However, Portland regulations implement "a very important model," which is to serve everyone, he says. Portland cabs cannot legally refuse service and at least 20 percent of a fleet must be wheelchair accessible.

Uber only provides services to those with a credit card through their smartphone, Dufay says.

But Uber representatives say their services provide an alternative to taxis, including being able to reach underserved locations. Uber says they are a technology company rather than a transportation company, simply providing information and connecting drivers to the marketplace.

Local law

As city officials ponder what is next for the tech-savvy applications, Portland taxicab companies are trying to remind them that fairness is key.

"Taxicab regulations go way beyond safety," says Raye Miles, president of Portland's Broadway Cab. Regulating the taxi industry has not been about technology, she says, but instead about protecting and supporting the values of the community.

However, Miles says it's "a good conversation to have," and she appreciates that the city is taking its time. In five to 10 years, she says, Portland will be ahead of the game because officials "slowed down enough to do it right."

In Portland, all for-hire transportation companies and vehicles must acquire company, vehicle and driver permits from the Revenue Bureau's Regulatory Division. Operating without a permit can lead to a \$1,500 fine and up to six months in prison. Vehicles can be towed and impounded.

Local companies also have little flexibility with price and number of taxicabs that can provide a legal for-hire service. In Portland, taxicabs cannot legally charge more than a \$2.50 initial fee, \$2.60 per mile and \$1 per additional passenger. While increasing cabs on the road would help "meet supply and demand on the fly," Miles says they just do not have that flexibility — noting that the city permitted an additional 78 taxicabs last year.

Unlike Portland cab companies, Uber adjusts its own fare and does not require UberX drivers to purchase commercial auto insurance or acquire a commercial license.

Uber's more expensive services, including Uber Black, Uber SUV and Uber Taxi rides are commercially licensed and covered by commercial insurance policies. The company provides \$1 million of liability

coverage per incident. And while the company encourages UberX drivers to purchase liability, collision and health insurance, it is not required.

Because Uber says they are a technology company, drivers agree to take complete responsibility for the services provided. According to their terms and conditions, by using the application, passengers enter at their own risk.

But Behrend says features on the app, including estimated time of arrival and GPS services help ensure that the service is safe. Riders also receive the photo, name, rating and license plate number of the driver before arrival. Upon conclusion of the ride, both drivers and passengers rate one another to ensure safety and accountability for both parties.

“Uber is the safest ride on the road,” Behrend says.

A modernizing industry

Local taxicab companies have been tracking companies like Uber, and it’s been on Broadway Cab’s radar for about three years, Miles says.

To keep up, Portland-serving companies Radio Cab and Broadway Cab have partnered to create a mobile app that is similar to other ridesharing apps available. Their mobile app Taxi Magic has been available for years. Their latest upgrade, Curb, is available for download.

“They like to make it sound like we are using 30-year-old cars that are dispatched with smoke signals,” Miles says. “We are pretty technologically advanced.”

Radio Cab General Manager Steve Entler says there is one “major difference” between their application and others like Uber — it only contracts licensed taxicab drivers, rather than, what he calls, “any Joe-Shmoe with four wheels.”

“It’s all smoke and mirrors,” says Entler, who has been involved in the industry for 43 years and is a member of Portland’s Private-for-Hire Transportation Board of Review. These companies brand themselves as providing ridesharing services, but really, he says, “It’s a vehicle for-hire transportation.”

To allow another company to come in and grow, while Portland taxicabs continue to be regulated as they are now, is simply off-putting, Miles says. Ultimately, she wants parity.

Making up more than half of the permitted taxicabs on the road in Portland, Broadway has experienced its busiest year in a long time, and if her drivers were able to compete equally, where both companies had the same restrictions and opportunity, Miles says she has no doubt that Broadway “would fare very well.”

For Entler, keeping up with the times is important. That is why all Radio Cab cars now have card readers in the back, so instead of drivers swiping customer cards, they stay in passenger hands, he says.

The driver-owned company, he says, can provide “equally, if not better,” service than Uber, and similar companies, which means properly licensed, professional drivers and fully insured commercial vehicles with no disregard to public safety, he says.

Entler says his company has survived and has done well. He says Radio Cab is “going to beat them at their own game.”

Fifty-eight-year-old UberX driver Eric Hansen pulled up on Eighth Street in downtown Vancouver, Wash., last week. He said hello with a grin and swiftly clicked open the trunk of his 2007 Toyota Rav4 to expose a full cooler of bottled ice water and coffee.

It is a service he provides all of his customers, he says, “because it usually starts everything out with a smile.”

Hansen was introduced to Uber just five weeks ago and started operating as an UberX driver in Vancouver on its first day in early July. Since then, he has provided about 150 rides, signed up 30 drivers, and with the help of promotions, says he’s earned about \$1,000 per week working full-time.

“I am just so taken with the company concept,” he says. “It’s a real industry.”

Ninety percent of Hansen’s drivers are business people, he says, and he already has regulars. He has given trips to passengers who come all the way from Paris and Dallas, Texas.

Anyone can do this, he says. From a college kid taking a study break to someone who wants to work full time, like himself. For anyone who wants to make some extra money, “it fits,” he says.

Despite Vancouver Assistant City Attorney Brent Boger’s recent memo evaluating the legality of Uber’s services in the city, drivers continue to operate.

So far, for Hansen, it is hard to sense a pattern in how many customers he is going to get in one day — some days its nine, the next 11 and sometimes one. He is retired and lives in Fisher’s Landing; before that he lived in Portland.

He has personal insurance on his car, and it was inspected by Midas prior to him gaining approval to drive. Uber picked up the cost of inspection, his smartphone and carjack, he says.

To help ensure safety, Uber drivers do not have to accept all rider requests, he says. And after a rider requests the service, the driver can contact them via text message or phone, but after the ride, their information is deleted, he says.

“I have seen a lot of trends over the years,” he says. “This is a new generation’s answer to transportation, to the old system.”

Here's how Uber works

Uber is a mobile application that can be downloaded on a smartphone and is used to hail rides from nearby drivers

approved to operate through the company. Users make payments using a credit card or PayPal account through their phone at a rate established by Uber.

Uber is a ridesharing company and uses a completely different model than a taxicab company, says spokeswoman Eva Behrend. Drivers are not required to operate 24/7, and they use their own vehicle — in essence, they are their own small business, she says.

Drivers can work on their own time, whether that means a few hours on the weekends or 40 hours per week. A driver working full-time in Los Angeles, on average, makes \$53,000 per year, and in San Francisco, an estimated \$72,000, she says.

If applying in Vancouver, Wash., Salem or Eugene, drivers can provide service through UberX.

Individuals at least 21, with a personal license and personal auto insurance, a vehicle, either mid-size or full-size, with four doors and in excellent condition can become a driver following a successful background, driving record and vehicle inspection check.

Uber collects 20 percent of gathered fares and provides the driver with a smartphone. Fares vary based on location and demand. In nearby Vancouver, Wash., UberX has a minimum \$6 fare, and charges \$1.65 per mile and 35 cents per minute.

In June, the six-year-old company was valued at \$17 billion.

City aims to calm traffic on busy bike corridor

*By Peter Korn
08/21/2014*

North Williams changes call for one car lane, bikes on left

Portland transportation officials unveiled last week their plans for traffic and bike changes on North Williams Avenue. Two lanes of vehicle traffic will become one in what has become the city's primary north/south biking corridor, and the bike lane will expand to more than twice its current width.

The incredibly complicated plan involves dozens of other modifications, including moving the bike lane from the right side of Williams to the left and adding traffic signals and turning lanes for cars.

Abraham Sutfin is taking a wait-and-see approach. Sutfin opened his Abraham Fixes Bikes shop at ground zero of the North Williams biking scene, at the corner of Williams and Fremont Street, four years ago. His business has grown steadily each year and he hasn't even needed to advertise. About 4,000 bike riders pass by his shop every day on Williams — up from 3,000 when he started.

Sutfin recognizes the resources the city is putting into making biking safer on North Williams and he appreciates the effort. But on his daily commute to his shop and back home to North Portland, Sutfin avoids the very street that has brought so much business to his door.

"Williams is a very uncomfortable road," Sutfin says. Drivers who park cars poorly leave the front or back ends of their cars jutting out into the bike lane, he says. The occasional car door opening into the bike lane is another danger. The five-foot-wide bike lane gets so crowded during rush hour that fast bike riders are frequently in conflict with slower riders.

The planned changes on North Williams might reduce the problems that have led Sutfin to use a mix of neighborhood streets on his daily ride. He'll give the 12-foot, left-side bike lane a try. But he's dubious North Williams will ever become his route of choice. Like so many regular bicyclists, riding for him has become the transportation equivalent — or maybe the reverse — of the old Yogi Berra line about a popular restaurant. "Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded," Berra reportedly said.

Sutfin's version? "I like quiet rides, so most likely I'll stick to the quiet roads," he says.

Some of the bike-safety improvements making their way to North Williams could eventually see wider use elsewhere. For instance, North Williams will be among the first streets in the city to have its bike lane on the left side of traffic. Southwest 12th Avenue downtown has a left-side bike lane. Northwest Everett Street is getting its bike lane moved to the left of traffic because engineers have seen too many conflicts

between bike riders and drivers turning right off Everett to get on Interstate 405. North Williams is having its bike lane moved because of conflicts between cyclists and buses moving to the right to pick up and drop off passengers.

The North Williams changes will include installing traffic signals on Cook Street, where it intersects with Williams and North Vancouver Avenue. The North Williams signal will incorporate a blue “bike only” indicator light to tell cyclists waiting for a green light that the inductive coil beneath pavement has detected their bike and will change the light. The blue light has been used elsewhere in the city.

Trying to find a balance between encouraging bike ridership and ensuring bike safety can be tricky. In 2012, a Bureau of Transportation report revealed that at 11 intersections with a history of auto-bike collisions, accidents doubled after the painting of bike boxes. The boxes encourage cyclists at red lights to pull in front of cars so they won't get hit when the light turns green and drivers turn right.

Some traffic engineers theorized the increasing number of crashes was due to cyclists feeling a false sense of security due to the painted bike lanes, green boxes, and special signals and signs aimed at keeping them safer.

Quiet back streets beckon

A.J. Zelada lives on one of the neighborhood streets that cyclists increasingly are taking instead of parallel North Williams, and he's pleased with the hundreds of cyclists now riding past his home on North Rodney

Avenue.

A daily bicyclist himself, the 65-year-old Zelada says his paramount concern is car drivers who use Rodney as an alternative route and blow through the stop sign at the end of his street. More bikes on Rodney slows down those cars, Zelada says, adding that most of his neighbors would agree.

Like Sutfin, Zelada says that unless he's in a hurry, he avoids the bike lane on North Williams for a more leisurely ride on back streets. He says the only change that will likely lure him into the bike lanes around the city are protected bike lanes with a physical buffer between cars and bikes. In fact, he and others lobbied transportation officials to make the new bike lane on North Williams a protected lane, since the city is eliminating a lane of traffic there anyway. Instead they are getting the extra-wide bike lane.

Zelada thinks the changes on North Williams are too cautious. He's certain they won't provide the safety that will get large numbers of new cyclists — women and children especially — to become regular riders. Unprotected bike lanes right next to moving cars, in his view, don't feel safe enough for the less dedicated riders, especially with the fastest cyclists speeding around them.

“They want to do the most common, least threatening, inch-by-inch change,” says Zelada, one-time chairman of the Oregon Department of Transportation's Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. “For Portland to push ahead we need to showcase change. We've come to this threshold and we're a little stuck. We're hesitant about moving ahead. Williams is a perfect example. ... It doesn't have a grand design to it.”

But putting a protected bike lane on North Williams won't be as easy as it was in a pilot project on Southwest Broadway in front of Portland State University, says Rich Newlands, Portland Bureau of Transportation project manager. Newlands says he anticipates a clamor for a protected bike lane on North Williams, but the number of driveways from homes on the avenue would make a protected lane difficult. “It would be very chopped up,” he says.

Hales starts e-mail newsletter

By Jim Redden
08/20/2014

Mayor Charlie Hales has starting e-mailing newsletters to anyone who has communicate with his office or signs up for them.

"We created the newsletter simply to keep people posted on what the mayor is up to. While we have a great City Hall press corps, the newsletter aggregates important news specifically from the mayor's office, providing an easy shorthand for Mayor Hales' priorities and activities. The way Mayor Hales sees it, the more easily accessible information constituents have, the better," says Hales' communications aide Sara Hottman.

The newsletter emailed Wednesday includes links to news stories and websites about local event. They include the "Enough is Enough" community meeting held after last weekend's eruption of violence and the MLS All Star game that was held on Aug. 6 at Providence Park. A picture of Hales and his wife Nancy at the game is prominently featured. It also announces a forum that Hales and Portland author Mitchell Jackson will host on the challenges facing young black Portlanders after the screening of a documentary named after his novel "The Residue Years" at the Portland Film Festival.

The email newsletters are part of an international trend by elected officials and government agencies to find new avenues for communicating with the public. Metro, the regional elected government, is one of the leaders of the trend. Among other things, it employs its own reporter who posts news stories about Metro online and it has retained DHM Research for online interactive online "OptIn" surveys.

Those want to subscribe to the newsletters can do so at Hales' website, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/mayor/60970>. E-mail addresses can be entered at a field under the "Social Media" heading. After that, hit "Subscribe."

Willamette Week

Fire Chief Erin Janssens Issues Statement on Club Sesso Investigation

By Nigel Jaquiss
08/21/2014

As WW reported yesterday, the city's Bureau of Human Resources is investigating the actions of Assistant Fire Marshal Doug Jones, who told the manager of a downtown sex club that he could ignore the fire marshal's denial of a special events permit.

WW obtained a transcript of a telephone call between Jones and the manager of Ron Jeremy's Club Sesso, in which Jones said there would be no enforcement of fire code violations the night of the June 28 event.

"I'm just telling you some things that I know about what we are doing this weekend that may or may not be helpful to you," Jones told the club's manager, Paul Smith, according to the transcript, adding, "You can do whatever you want with that, that you think is right."

When Club Sesso went ahead with the party on June 28 in violation of the fire marshal' permit denial, a fire marshal's inspector and two Oregon Liquor Control inspectors arrived unexpectedly. The OLCC cited Club Sesso for serving liquor in parts of its building that lacked permits.

But before the fire inspector could cite the club, Jones drove in from his home in Sandy and assured Club Sesso personnel there would be "no repercussions from the Fire Bureau."

Portland Fire & Rescue Chief Erin Janssens refused to answer WW's questions about Jones' actions prior to the Tuesday's deadline for this week's print edition.

But on Wednesday night, she issued the following statement:

"PF&R is fully cooperative and supportive of this investigation. Unfortunately, we're unable to comment further until the process is complete."

The Mercury

One Small Step

Hales Embraces Tiny Houses as Potential Remedy for Homelessness

By Denis C. Theriault
08/20/2014

"TINY HOUSES"—small, handcrafted homes built on wheels or plopped in affluent backyards—have quickly become a symbol of DIY Portland at its most twee and sustainable.

For people with the money and a bit of know-how, the construction of a 200-square-foot home can bestow many blessings: It's interesting enough to be discussed at dinner parties, or shown off on one tour or another by enthusiasts. It's also a direct route to salvation from the rat race, giving harried professionals a chance to spend less to live, and maybe even step back and slow down.

That magic, and its implications for Portland's tight housing market, already caught the eye of Portland City Council—which long ago passed legislation making it easier for residents to build backyard cottages. But now, thanks to the relentless pushing of a vocal advocate for the homeless, Portland City Hall might finally be ready to take the city's romance with "tiny houses" in a decidedly less glamorous direction.

Faced with skyrocketing rents, a shortage of affordable homes, and persistently chronic homelessness—while also looking to spread limited construction dollars as far as possible—Mayor Charlie Hales' office has agreed to explore city-subsidized tiny houses as part of a range of nontraditional solutions for easing Portland's housing crisis.

Hales' office has begun assembling an internal "task force" of city officials familiar with zoning, planning, and other bureaucratic concerns. It's also begun building a list of surplus government land in hopes of finding suitable sites—not only for tiny homes, but maybe for ideas like more Right 2 Dream Too-style "rest areas" and an AmeriCorps relief camp, matching social services with temporary and permanent housing.

The ambitious goal, says Josh Alpert, Hales' director of strategic initiatives, is to have some kind of pilot project up and running within the next year. Alpert's working with staffers for Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau.

"We have a seemingly unsolvable [housing] problem, and a fairly static and occasionally growing houseless population," says Alpert. "We've put a lot of money into it, and we're really not making enough of a dent to where we can say, 'Okay, we're getting somewhere.'"

"If this can work, I see this as an incredibly 'Portland' community-based solution."

High on the list is some kind of "micro community" pilot project—essentially a dozen or so tiny homes, all with kitchens and bathrooms, sharing a large piece of land, including a common area. Rents would be kept to a couple of hundred dollars a month. That way, people on fixed incomes, making about \$1,000 a month, could afford to pay and either leave the streets, or keep from landing there in the first place.

That concept is the brainchild of a housing advocate named Mike Withey, who was best known in city hall for helping tend the flames of a longtime camping vigil outside the building's front door. Withey had been building the concept for months before presenting it to the Portland City Council in June.

And it's attractive because the cost of each unit, about \$12,000 even with decent amenities, would still be just a fraction of what it costs to build traditional apartments.

"Now's the time to do that," Alpert says, giving Withey credit for "unlocking" Hales' imagination when it comes to tiny houses as a balm for the city's housing ills. "If we've got the land, and the housing is that inexpensive, then let's do it."

Withey's been a familiar face in city hall since the spring, meeting with Commissioner Amanda Fritz to talk about code enforcement and zoning concerns, even before going to the full council in June. He's also met with Alpert and Saltzman's chief of staff, Brendan Finn.

"I've yet to see one person say this was a bad idea," Withey told the council back in June. "That single mom who's working two jobs, at McDonald's, deserves to live in your neighborhood just as much as you do."

He's also brought some clout for his idea, teaming up with a prominent pair of affordable housing developers—Rob Justus, co-founder of homelessness services agency JOIN, and Dave Carboneau, a former Portland General Electric executive.

The concept relies on the purchase of easily assembled tiny homes manufactured by an Oregon company named TechDwell, another of Carboneau's concerns. Carboneau and his partner first tested their structures in earthquake-ravaged Haiti.

Carboneau and Justus both confirmed the preliminary conversations with Hales' office. They were cautiously optimistic when told those chats were far from cursory. And they say construction logistics would fit within Alpert's rough one-year timeline.

"It's feasible," Justus says, "in that you can build them in a couple of weeks."

But that's the easy part, Justus and Carboneau say.

Finding public land will require political salesmanship—and that hunt probably can't include land held by the city's water and sewer bureaus, lest the developers have to offer market price to pay back the city's utility ratepayers.

Then there's figuring out whether they're close enough to transportation, whether they're big enough to hold enough tiny homes (or a rest area, or someday, an AmeriCorps camp), whether zoning rules might need tweaking, and whether neighbors need reassurances so they won't throw a fit. Water and electrical hookups would be needed, too.

In St. Johns, where Withey has approached neighbors about a potential site, some residents were quick to sound the alarm.

"I don't think any of it's insurmountable," Alpert says. "It's a matter of going through them one by one."

Other skeptics have raised concerns about the quality of the units and the symbolism of embracing options like tent cities and relief camps.

And there's likely to be some institutional critics looking to defend the status quo, where millions of dollars are spent subsidizing traditional projects by large developers.

"Given that we have a 30-year record of being able to successfully house a lot of people without being able to solve the problem, you've got to have tools outside the box," says Israel Bayer, executive director of Street Roots and a well-respected advocate in city hall when it comes to housing matters. "We need large investments around a whole range of different strategies. This would be one of them."

The Observer

Look to Your Left!

Bike lane on Williams Avenue switching sides for safety

By Donovan M. Smith
08/20/2014

Of note, back in 1973 under Mayor Terry Schrunk, Portland adopted its first bike plan calling for 190 miles of bicycle infrastructure to be built in the city.

With many low income people, specifically black, moving to the outskirts of town in recent years, DePass says she'll be watching closely to see what efforts are made by the city to instill bike infrastructure on that side of town.

Rich Newlands, who took over as project manager of the Williams redesign from Ellen Vanderslice who started the public conversation about safety-changes on Williams back in 2011, mirrored DePass' statements that the neighborhood had been advocating for safety changes for years but came to no avail until the recent "neighborhood change," as he called it.

One new plan adopted to address the concerns is an \$80,000 public art project set to honor the history of African American presence in the neighborhood.

"Things like the honoring history component of the project, is definitely a result of that conversation about how the city needs to think of this as not just a matter of transportation, but needs to think more holistically about what this project means to this neighborhood, again, the history of the neighborhood and issues like gentrification and neighborhood change," Newlands said.

An artist or artist team has yet to be chosen to fulfill this instillation, but has been narrowed down to a handful of potentials.

Taking cue from the advisory committee, Newland says Portland Bureau of Transportation will be monitoring the project's success after its completion using a method that is "part data" and "people's impressions" about the street and neighborhood feeling safer.

“We want to continue the conversation with the community, continue to make myself available to come out and meet with the neighborhood associations, and ask, you know, ‘how is it working, are we meeting those goals?’

Newland says much of the current functionality of Williams Avenue is a “relic of ‘60s planning.”