

The Oregonian

1 week in, Portland's \$2 million plan to help at-risk teens off to 'booming' start

By Andrew Theen
June 19, 2015

One week into Portland's experiment to offer free access for at-risk youths to a popular community center, organizers say turnout is shattering expectations.

More than 600 registered for free summer youth passes at Matt Dishman Community Center in inner Northeast Portland in the span of a few days.

"It's better than we had hoped," Dana Haynes, Mayor Charlie Hales' spokesman, said Friday.

Maximo Behrens, Dishman's director, said the community center was "booming" with activity. "We've been registering people consistently," he said.

The City Council approved Hales' \$2 million budget request to open the doors at Dishman for those younger than 18 throughout the summer. Hales said he wanted to put a paintbrush or a basketball in teens' hands to keep them out of trouble. Hales and Commissioner Amanda Fritz's office worked with the Parks Bureau to design the program. Fritz oversees the bureau.

The program includes services at other parks facilities throughout the year. Hales suggested the teen program as the city grappled with gang shootings, including a shooting outside the Police Bureau's East Precinct in March.

At Dishman, teens with the youth pass get free access to the basketball gym, pool, weight room, boxing center game room and other services. Behrens said the center also has art classes starting up soon.

The city also plans to open the Dishman, East Portland, St. Johns and Mt. Scott community centers to teens on as many as 40 Saturday nights starting this year for activities and educational programs. Security personnel will be at the sites.

And officials plan to convert the Montavilla Community Center to a year-round teen center from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Eileen Argentina, Parks Bureau manager, said officials are still figuring out how many employees should be on hand at each center. But she said the city will hire at least three new staffers, including an additional teen program coordinator to direct services across sites.

Resources	\$2.00M
High Risk Youth (FT/PT staff, custodial)	\$ 140K
General Population of Teens (FT/PT staff, equip):	\$ 390K
Free Drop-in Access Pilot (PT staff, equip):	\$ 130K
Montavilla as a City Wide Year Round Teen Center:	\$ 300K
Program Wide Costs (sup, gang outreach, trans, training):	\$(270K)
Resources for Community Partners	\$ 320K
Overall Expenses -	\$1.55M
Revenue Impacts - approximately	\$ 450K

Updated 6/4/15 ea.

The Saturday night plans are still in progress, she said, but officials hope to ramp up activities at Montavilla by July, with the center "up and running" as a teen facility by September.

According to cost estimates provided to The Oregonian/OregonLive.com, Portland is setting aside \$320,000 of the \$2 million request to award grants to community organizations for more teen programs.

Hales' office contacted organizations including the Latino Network, Self-Enhancement Inc. and the Boys & Girls Club for proposals, which are now being evaluated.

The free access will affect the city's bottom line, documents show, by forgoing an estimated \$450,000 in revenue.

Behrens said Dishman's free program runs until Aug. 15, when the center closes for its two-week annual maintenance.

Should Portland restrict Car2Go's parking privileges to prevent 'stacking' problems?

*By Joseph Rose
June 21, 2015*

Car2Go is supposed to improve Portland's livability. But Nick Zukin, owner of the popular Chinatown eatery Mi Mero Mole, isn't so sure the car-sharing company's ubiquitous micro vehicles are good for business.

On a recent morning, as the restaurant's busy lunch hour approached, pod-like Car2Gos occupied six of the 10 spaces on the street outside the Mexican restaurant.

Frustrated, Zukin snapped a photo of the scene at Northwest Couch Street and Fifth Avenue and posted it on Facebook. To drive home his point, he gave each of the blue-and-white car in the picture a number.

Using the Cadillac of swear words, he also wrote that Car2Go gave "0%" response to his ongoing complaints about its cars loitering in metered parking spaces that customers could be using.

Zukin's social-media rant, which drew several sympathetic responses, underscores a simmering frustration among some Portlanders who think Car2Go does a lousy job of moving around its 518 Smart cars.

"I think it does hurt business," Zukin told The Oregonian/OregonLive.

Residents have complained about what feels like a Car2Go invasion where several vehicles frequently line the curbs in their neighborhoods for several days. And too often, Zukin said, the stubby two-seaters are clustered for hours in metered spots, hogging much of downtown's already tight on-street parking inventory.

As the Portland Bureau of Transportation ratchets up efforts to discourage commuters from driving – or even owning -- private vehicles in the central city, it has actively promoted car-sharing services. Still, city officials appear increasingly open to putting new restrictions on Car2Go in Portland's blossoming retail and restaurant districts.

Car2Go customers pay for each minute they use a vehicle. Parking, gas and insurance are included in the cost. Cars can be parked at metered parking marked for an hour or more – and stay for longer than the time limit.

One way to deal with business owners' complaints about Car2Go "stacking" would be to limit parking to less than an hour outside more storefronts, said Diane Dulken, a PBOT spokeswoman.

"That way Car2Go vehicles couldn't park there," Dulken said. "But at the same time, that would limit the time that regular customers had."

PBOT is in the process of finalizing a new annual permit for Car2Go, which currently requires the company to pay the city \$674,810 a year for street parking.

City Hall wants to hear directly from business owners and residents concerned with Car2Gos bunching up so that it can assess the severity of the problem and "work towards the best option," Dulken said.

At the same time, transportation officials say, business owners shouldn't dismiss Car2Go users as freeloaders. They could also be customers. "It's useful to take a look at the overall benefits of car-sharing and how it provides increased access by providing an additional transportation choice," Dulken said.

Since launching in 2012, Austin-based Car2Go has become wildly popular in Portland, where the fleet has nearly doubled from 230 vehicles and the "home area" has stretched to 42 square miles.

Company managers say vehicles tend to move organically around the city – thanks to more than 35,000 local members. Typically, a vehicle sits idle in a parking spot for only two or three hours, said Car2Go spokeswoman Dacyl Armendariz.

"When we are contacted by a business owner," Armendariz said, "our fleet team will move the vehicle in question per their request."

But that's not what happened when Zukin and his restaurant manager called the local Car2Go office for help with the vehicles clustered outside his business, he said.

"They said, 'Sorry, there's nothing we can do about it,'" Zukin said. "Why would they want six cars just sitting on the same block. That doesn't seem like a good distribution of inventory."

Armendariz agrees with that last point. She said the company plans to investigate the incident.

Portland is far from the only city where residents and businesses have complained of Car2Gos stacking up.

Earlier this year, the city of Calgary responded to concerns about Car2Gos clustering along streets by approving a new parking surcharge that the company must pay if its vehicles take up 25 percent or more of available space in meter zones. The cars are tracked electronically and the fee is averaged over a month.

However, transportation planners maintain the myriad benefits of car-sharing to the community -- from reduced air pollution and congestion to increased mobility for people who can't afford to own a car -- far outweigh any annoyances.

In theory, commuters with a Car2Go membership are more likely to take public transit or bicycle to work if they know there's a supply on-demand rental cars scattered around the city for errands and emergencies.

That said, PBOT officials say they are sympathetic to Zukin and others who want Car2Go to be more aggressive with how it plays musical cars.

If someone feels Car2Go isn't being responsive to complaints about cars taking up parking spots, "then that person should contact PBOT and we will work with them," Dulken said.

If you feel that things are stacking up, call the Portland Car2Go office at 877-488-4224. For backup, PBOT's number is 503-823-1700.

The Portland Tribune

Council formally adopts new budget

*By Jim Redden
June 20, 2015*

The City Council has unanimously adopted the \$3.68 billion budget that takes effect on July 1.

No one testified for or against the 2015-2016 fiscal year budget at Thursday's hearing.

Mayor Charlie Hales said the budget reflects a back-to-basics approach to spending that is appreciated by most Portlanders.

The budget includes \$485 million in General Fund dollars, the revenue source over which the council has the most discretion. That is a \$49 million increase over the current budget, with most of the growth coming from increased property taxes and business license fee collections related to the economic recovery.

Much of the increase — approximately \$20 million — is dedicated to transportation-related projects, including increased road maintenance and safety projects, especially in East Portland. Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick said that was the greatest General Fund increase for transportation projects in 30 years.

The budget also includes \$2 million to reduce user fees and increase youth attendance at community centers operated by Portland Parks & Recreation. Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz said the spending proposed by Hales was a good alternative to hiring more police officers to combat rising gang violence. Hales said the program had started early and already resulted in more young people attending the Matt Dishman Community Center in Northeast Portland.

The adopted budget will increase combined water, sewer and stormwater management rates 4.7 percent.

The council will later discuss pay differences between full-time, part-time and seasonal employees, and raising the minimum wage of all city employees to \$15 an hour, Fritz said.

For previous coverage, visit www.pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/261989-134313-flush-with-cash-portland-oks-city-budget-with-little-debate.

City to support redevelopment of New Copper Penny, other Lents properties

*By Steve Law
June 19, 2015*

After years of fits and false starts, city efforts to revitalize the hard-scrabble community of Lents may be moving ahead.

The Portland Development Commission will vote Wednesday on funding three redevelopment projects in the heart of Lents' historic town center — including the pivotal New Copper Penny restaurant, bar and night club site. Combined, the three projects could cost \$66 million, with PDC providing financing to get them off the ground.

The urban renewal agency proposes a \$1.3 million predevelopment loan and a \$5.1 million development loan to Palindrome Communities Inc., led by Chad Rennaker. Rennaker has a purchase agreement to buy the New Copper Penny site on the southeast corner of Foster Road and 92nd Avenue, long considered the lynchpin of efforts to revitalize the commercial heart of Lents. In addition, he has a purchase agreement to buy the Chevron gas station across the street to the west, and would build on PDC's 1-acre L-shaped site west and south of the gas station.

Rennaker has stated plans to build a \$40 million worth of affordable housing, commercial space and parking.

PDC's second pending project in Lents is smaller but involves some big names in Portland's development world: Homer Williams and Dike Dame.

The agency proposes to loan Williams/Dame & Associates \$1.3 million for predevelopment work, plus a construction loan of up to \$4.8 million, and convey the agency's .6-acre site due north of the Chevron station, on the northwest corner of 92nd and Foster. Williams and Dame propose to build a mix of affordable and market-rate apartments plus ground-floor commercial space and surface parking. That project has a total estimated cost of \$15.7 million.

The third project, known as the Asian Health & Services Center, is proposed on .7-acre west of 91st Avenue on the north side of Foster, two blocks west of the Williams and Dame site.

PDC would provide a \$786,800 predevelopment loan and a \$3.1 million construction loan.

The project, pegged to cost \$10.6 million, is envisioned to include medical clinics, office and community meeting space, and two commercial spaces to be rented at market rate.

PDC also has interest from Palindrome and Rose Community Development Corp. in two other PDC-owned properties, after putting out feelers earlier this year.

But the agency is now viewing the three projects as a first phase of redevelopment, says PDC spokesman Shawn Uhlman. The agency could return to those other projects at a later time, he says.

After the first phase is completed, the value of PDC's considerable other land holdings in Lents could rise, he says, and there'll be a clearer need of what's going on in the real estate market there.

Rose is working on a project north of the Williams and Dame site. PDC has asked Rose to refine some of its proposal.

Palindrome has expressed interest in building housing at the 3.5-acre site southwest of 92nd and Harold Street, next to the Wattles Boys and Girls Club.

The sequencing of the first three projects was done because those were more ready to proceed, Uhlman says.

Though Lents' prospects for development are looking better than they have in years, it's still hard for projects there to win traditional bank financing, Uhlman says. "PDC is filling a role as a gap financier, a pretty significant one."

For several years, PDC spent urban renewal fund buying up empty or under utilized properties, hoping to strike a big deal or "home run." But Mayor Charlie Hales ordered the agency to shift course after he took office, and pressured PDC to start seeking deals for some of its vacant properties. The new strategy is defined as hitting singles.

Though Lents neighbors hope to lure a large grocery store to the 92nd and Foster area, none of the three projects are discussing grocery stores. It appears the area still doesn't meet the specifications of most grocery chains.

But redeveloping the New Copper Penny and luring big-name developers like Williams and Dame could wind up being more like doubles or even triples, if not the long-sought home run.

Homer Williams has been involved in numerous high-profile developments in Portland, in the Forest Heights community, Pearl District and South Waterfront, along with Broken Top in Bend and projects in downtown Los Angeles.

Rennaker previously developed the Pints brewpub in Old Town/Chinatown, and is now building the Z Haus brewpub and restaurant in Lents on 92nd Avenue.

Though little-known in Portland, he has been a principal in developing apartments and mixed-use retail projects in New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and elsewhere. Palindrome presented materials to the PDC showing it has a nearly \$600 million portfolio of nearly 7,000 apartment units. Rennaker confirmed he's the majority owner of the company.

The PDC board meets starting 1 p.m. Wednesday to consider the three deals, along with other items.

11-point plan strives to slow gentrification

*By Steve Law
June 18, 2015*

Up and down the West coast, city efforts to forestall gentrification have proved largely futile.

But Portland is giving it a try.

As the city redraws its state-mandated comprehensive land-use plan to guide development and zoning over the next 20 years, it's poised to include new strategies to ward off displacement of residents when neighborhoods grow more desirable.

Portland rents are skyrocketing, and a 2013 study by PSU professor Lisa Bates found a host of neighborhoods in North, Northeast and Southeast Portland were vulnerable to gentrification — even a swath of East Portland between 82nd Avenue and Interstate 205. A February report in *Governing* magazine found Portland has experienced gentrification in more neighborhoods than any other of the nation's 50 largest cities since 2000.

That same month, a coalition of 22 Portland community groups released an 11-point plan for tough new anti-displacement policies, and began lobbying city planners and the Planning and Sustainability Commission to insert those into the new comprehensive land use or "comp plan."

The coalition, which formed just for this campaign, got a surprisingly sympathetic response.

"Right now, we're feeling like we have substantial success on all 11 of them," says Cameron Herrington, a coalition leader who works on anti-gentrification strategies for the group Living Cully. The Planning and Sustainability Commission is slated to hold a final work session on the comp plan on June 23 and then forward it to the City Council for final adoption.

It remains to be seen, though, if the good intentions and flowery language being added to the comp plan will result in meaningful change, or if it's too late to avert widespread gentrification.

Nearly half of Portlanders are tenants. Many live in fear their monthly rent will jump \$300, forcing them to move on 30 days' notice, says Justin Buri, executive director of Community Alliance of Tenants, which is part of the ad hoc coalition.

In past eras, low-income tenants and people of color were most subject to being pushed out by higher rents. "For the first time in our history," Buri says, "it's starting to have an impact on higher-income white renters as well."

The coalition's strategies include a displacement impact analysis before the city undertakes major projects, provisions to ease or prevent such impacts, and proposals to add more affordable housing.

“There’s not a silver bullet to (avert) gentrification,” says André Baugh, chairman of the Planning and Sustainability Commission. “All of these things combined can make an impact.”

Why the comp plan?

The comp plan is “where the city articulates its values and priorities,” says Khanh Pham, a coalition leader who works on environmental justice issues for the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, known as APANO. “We don’t see this as the end of the fight, but I think it is a crucial starting point,” Pham says.

The core function of the comp plan is to provide for places where future Portlanders will live and work, says Eric Engstrom, the city’s principal planner overseeing much of the comp plan rewrite. “Displacement is a sign that it isn’t working for everyone.”

The coalition includes nonprofits and advocacy groups that focus on affordable housing, land use and economic development issues, often working closely with tenants and people of color. It was more effective than those working on anti-gentrification in the past because it spoke with one voice, Baugh says.

Separately, the city is studying the idea of granting developers the right to build larger projects, such as in the central city or mixed-use zones in neighborhoods, in exchange for building some affordable housing.

Coalition members don’t want to repeat the widespread displacement of Portland’s African-American community from its historic base in inner North and Northeast Portland as that area gentrified in the past 10 or 20 years.

“If we had some of this in the last comp plan,” Herrington says, “the results might have been different.”

Don’t oversell plan

Engstrom says it’s wise not to “oversell” the ability of comp plan language to prevent gentrification.

Provisions won’t come into play every time a single site is developed or rezoned, he says, and will be more relevant during big land-use changes or public investments.

But the comp plan functions as a sort of constitution guiding the city’s zoning and land-use decisions. “People can appeal if they believe we have not adequately addressed the policies in that plan,” Engstrom says. With regard to environmental justice issues that often are related to gentrification, the new language “raises the bar of the required conversation,” he says.

Perhaps the most important of the 11 policies is the gentrification impact analysis. Once that’s done, the city might know whether it needs to approach a rezoning or public investment differently, or to provide for ways to ease or prevent displacement.

“The idea is similar to an environmental impact statement,” Herrington says. Instead of evaluating the impact of a big development on endangered fish or air quality, it’s the impact on the people living and working in the area. “This is saying, ‘We’re going to make a major investment. What’s the effect going to be on people?’ “

One looming example is the pan-Asian Jade District, a mini-urban renewal area on Southeast 82nd Avenue with tentacles along Southeast Division Street and Powell Boulevard.

TriMet’s planned rapid bus line on Powell and Division also could increase property values and rents in the area, Pham says. The area has already started to gentrify.

A smattering of bungalows in Lents was demolished in recent years, replaced by two-story homes sold to multigenerational Chinese families who wanted to live near the Jade District.

Homebuilders out of the loop

So far, there’s been little opposition to the anti-gentrification package, but the coalition hasn’t vetted it with likely critics, such as the trade group representing home builders and developers.

Developers around the country have adapted to similar policies, Herrington says. “We’re not concerned that demand for housing is going to dry up and development will become unprofitable.”

Dave Nielsen, chief executive officer of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland, says his group has been paying attention to other matters, but he was skeptical about the anti-gentrification package.

“There’s good talk by the city that we care about gentrification,” Nielsen says, “and yet other decisions by the city are having just the opposite impact.”

He cites the recent increase in parks systems development charges levied on new housing, and recent efforts to restrict “skinny houses.” Those moves will make housing more unaffordable, Nielsen says.

The proposed new comp plan sets a new, aggressive target for adding affordable housing stock: 10,000 more units in the next 20 years. That would more than double the current supply. But it’s unclear if the ambitious goal will have any impact without money attached.

And some of the new language has been deployed before, and ignored.

The city required a displacement impact analysis in the original Albina Community Plan adopted in 1993, recalls Joe Zehnder, the city’s chief planner. That sowed the seeds for huge improvements in inner North and Northeast Portland, which were so successful that they priced out thousands of African-American residents and businesses.

One of the proposed new comp plan policies — ensuring that urban renewal benefits local communities — was lifted straight out of the Interstate Urban Renewal Area plan approved in 2000, Engstrom says. That plan also contributed to widespread displacement of African-Americans and other low-income residents from North Portland.

Zehnder figures Portland will face gentrification pressures as long as it’s an attractive place to live. Addressing that boils down to two main solutions, he says: build more housing, so demand doesn’t exceed supply; and build more permanently affordable housing. Those are “almost like our best shot at this,” he says.