

The Oregonian

Housing, grocery projects coming to Portland's MLK, ending Trader Joe's controversy

*By Andrew Theen
August 17, 2015*

Leaders on Monday celebrated the rebirth of two Northeast Portland developments expected to bring local businesses, a grocery store and dozens of affordable apartments to two long-vacant lots on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

City officials delivered the news nearly a year after choosing Natural Grocers to replace a planned – and controversial – Trader Joe's on a city-owned lot.

That project, at Northeast Alberta Street, is back on track pending city approval. Officials also announced a project to build affordable housing on a city-owned site once home to a metallurgy laboratory one mile south, between Northeast Cook and Ivy Streets.

Colas Construction, a minority-owned Portland general contractor, will lead both projects.

Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Dan Saltzman stood alongside African American business and civic leaders Monday to say the developments represent key steps in reversing the displacement of longtime minority residents.

"We should celebrate, but we can't rest," Hales said, citing Portland's profile as a national destination for transplants.

Saltzman, who oversees the city Housing Bureau, said the housing project is about much more than a place to live. It will provide more economic opportunities and will allow black residents to regain a community they lost to gentrification by giving preference to "households with roots in the community."

The announcement came 18 months after Trader Joe's dropped the grocery site in the face of community opposition – including cries of gentrification and backroom shenanigans. That controversy, which included calls by the Portland African American Leadership forum for more affordable housing, paved the way for the new projects.

In March 2014, Hales directed the Portland Development Commission to spend an additional \$20 million on affordable housing in the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area during the next five years, beyond the \$16.6 million budgeted. The Housing Bureau then held community meetings on how to spend the money.

Bishop Steven Holt, who headed the community committee overseeing the five-year housing plan, said now he's grateful for the controversy. "More times than not, crisis is what's necessary to bring a change," he said.

At the grocery property, California developer Majestic Realty will buy the land at a \$2.4 million discount. Plus it will get a \$122,750 city development grant to offset design changes that address community concerns.

The housing site, known as the Grant Warehouse property, will probably include at least \$4.5 million in urban-renewal funds, roughly one-quarter of the \$20 million pot.

The developers, Gerding Edlen and the nonprofit Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives Inc., will pay nothing for the 32,000-square-foot property. The nonprofit will own and operate the housing.

Maxine Fitzpatrick, executive director of the nonprofit, said the city is showing "tremendous commitment" to addressing the involuntary displacement, over decades, of black families from inner North and Northeast Portland.

"What happened in the past does not have to continue in the future," she said at the site.

Fitzpatrick said the vision is to create a mix of income levels for the family-size units. For example some would be available to residents making less than 30 percent of the median family income, some making less than 60 percent.

The original plan calls for 45 to 70 units, with ground-floor retail. Nothing is set in stone, and no firm timeline has been set.

Andrew Colas, president of Colas Construction, said the project won't begin immediately but will be something the public can be proud of.

"I would actually like to be here with a shovel and start digging these foundations and getting this project to work," he said.

Affordable Housing In Northeast Portland: \$20 Million Discussion Just A Start Pastor Steven Holt discusses what comes next after Portland pledges to hand over land in northeast, dedicates

One housing project doesn't begin to reverse decades of displacement, Saltzman said. But "one day soon, we may look back and say it was the first page in a new chapter on North and Northeast Portland."

Holt said the black community faced years of broken promises. "What we have today is the beginning of a kept promise. We've got to make sure we follow through with it."

Ideally, housing officials said, construction could begin on the housing complex next summer.

The Natural Grocers development, with 10,000 square feet of retail space beyond the grocery store, could break ground this fall.

Ted Wheeler vs. Charlie Hales? Poll data, political buzz point to race for mayor, not governor

*By Denis C. Theriault
August 16, 2015*

Is Treasurer Ted Wheeler, weighing a run for Portland mayor, still nursing notions of challenging Gov. Kate Brown instead?

That's not what Oregon's leading Democratic fundraisers say they're hearing. And recent polling data obtained by The Oregonian/OregonLive — showing Wheeler and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales in an apparent dead heat — could be one reason why.

"He's thinking about running for mayor," said Joe Esmonde, business representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' Local 48. "Nobody is saying there's going to be a primary for Governor Brown."

How convinced is Esmonde? His union handed Brown a \$25,000 donation last month — even though she has yet to officially announce she's running for the right to finish Gov. John Kitzhaber's term next year. That check would have waited if the electrical workers thought she'd face a credible rival.

"I was pretty confident," Esmonde said. "That's a lot of money."

Brown, in a private poll released in June, earned a 55 percent approval rating — faring well among Democrats and Republicans alike. She also won praise from unions representing public employees and trades workers after the legislative session ended.

That popularity, along with concerns about further roiling the party so soon after Kitzhaber's resignation last winter, looms as a daunting deterrent for would-be Democratic rivals.

"I haven't seen anything from Wheeler" indicating a statewide run, said Matt Swanson, executive director of the Service Employees International Union's Oregon executive council. "I don't think he even knows what he's doing yet."

Wheeler, who declined to comment last week, addressed the speculation July 21, telling The Oregonian/OregonLive he would announce his plans within "the next couple of weeks."

"As you know, people traditionally wait until Labor Day," he said. "I'm not going to wait that long. Frankly, because I don't want this hanging over my head."

He hadn't said no to challenging Brown at the time. But with Labor Day now quickly approaching, he may decide he has a more compelling reason to consider challenging Hales.

A sampling of 400 Portland voters in early May found that 31 percent would vote for Hales and 28 percent would vote for Wheeler, well within the 5 percent margin of error. Fully 41 percent weren't sure whom they'd vote for.

Wheeler fared better than other possible challengers: House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and City Commissioner Nick Fish, who stood 8 and 11 percentage points behind Hales, respectively. The poll, reviewed by The Oregonian/OregonLive, was conducted by a reputable firm and was independent of any specific campaign.

The poll also showed that Wheeler has more room for improvement. Hales earned favorable marks from 48 percent of voters and unfavorable reviews from 25 percent, with 28 percent undecided. Wheeler had 34 percent favorable, 6 percent unfavorable and 60 percent undecided.

A more recent poll, from late July, showed Hales with similarly high approval ratings in the high 40s and negatives in the mid-30s, according to a source with knowledge of the results. But that poll, also conducted by a reputable firm and independent of any campaign, had a smaller sample size and higher margin of error.

Either way, Hales remains relatively strong, particularly compared to former Mayor Sam Adams. In 2011, after Adams announced he wouldn't seek re-election, Adams received unfavorable ratings from 49 percent of 300 voters polled.

"He'd be a good mayor," Esmonde said of Wheeler, adding the two haven't discussed it. "He'd have support not just from the labor community but from business, too."

That combination may not guarantee success. In the 2012 mayor's race, the electrical workers and the Portland Business Alliance both endorsed businesswoman Eileen Brady, who failed to make the runoff despite raising \$1.4 million.

Messages left with Hales' spokesman and with his campaign were not immediately returned.

Joe Baessler, political director for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which has clashed with Hales' administration, said Wheeler would deserve consideration.

"We're not recruiting him or asking him to run," Baessler said. But "it'll be interesting."

The Portland Tribune

City launches war on weeds at Forest Park

*By Steve Law
August 18, 2015*

For two decades, a slew of volunteers and professionals have hacked away at English ivy, blackberries and other invasive plants engulfing Forest Park, the crown jewel of Portland's park system.

But at best they've just been "holding the line," says Kendra Petersen-Morgan, a natural resource ecologist for Portland Parks & Recreation, as ivy continues choking trees and invasives push out native plants and diminish wildlife habitat.

"The problem is we are losing native species diversity," Petersen-Morgan says. "Left untouched, it's going to spread and infect the rest of the park."

Now the city is embarking on its most ambitious plan of attack yet, a multiyear effort called Restore Forest Park that aims to eliminate invasives entirely from Portland's iconic park, one area at a time.

Starting in mid-August, crews will dig into 155 acres near Balch Creek, on the southern side of Forest Park, funded by a \$100,000 Nature in Neighborhoods grant from Metro. Next spring, a second phase will commence on 170 acres on the north side of Forest Park.

The parks bureau, in cooperation with the Forest Park Conservancy, Metro and others, is making Restore Forest Park an early step in a grander campaign called Renew Forest Park, which is projected to take 20 years and cost of at least \$20 million. That campaign envisions ecological restoration of the 5,200-acre park as well as a new official park entrance, nature center, wheelchair-accessible trail and viewing

platform. The nature center parking lot will accommodate school buses, expanding the use of Forest Park for field trips. The Oregon Legislature recently granted \$1.5 million for design and other preliminary work.

While actual construction is not yet scheduled — or funded — ecological restoration is starting now with the work on invasives.

Forest Park's southern and eastern sides are swamped with English ivy, holly, laurel, clematis and non-native blackberries, Petersen-Morgan says. "I call them ecologically damaging weeds."

Not surprisingly, the most infected areas are those that border urbanized areas, the usual entry point for invasives.

Forest Park isn't the only city park riddled by invasives; Mount Tabor Park and others also have been ravaged. But the parks bureau's three full-time staff working on invasives spend more than half their time at Forest Park, focusing on the healthiest sections first, Petersen-Morgan says.

Tried and true methods

The city will use the same techniques as in the past. Crews will dig out invasives by hand in easily accessible areas near hiking trails. On steep or sensitive terrain, state-licensed professionals carrying backpack tanks will use wands to spray herbicides directly on offending plants. They'll spray a mix of glyphosate and triclopyr. Glyphosate is the main active ingredient in Roundup; triclopyr is an ingredient in Crossbow, two widely available commercial herbicides.

"These have been selected because they are biodegradable, they have low toxicity and they do not bioaccumulate or persist," Petersen-Morgan says.

"There's nothing new," says John Reed, who coordinates the Integrated Pest Management Program for Portland Parks & Recreation. "The only new thing here is we finally have money set aside in the budget to tackle these things."

Other organizations that manage natural areas, including Metro, The Nature Conservancy and The Audubon Society, use the same herbicides, Reed says.

Parks officials say the herbicides are more practical than trying to dig out weeds by hand throughout Forest Park, and are the safest available chemical mix that will do the trick.

But there is one new wrinkle in the use of glyphosate, the world's most widely used herbicide.

New findings

In March, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a research arm of the World Health Organization, labeled glyphosate "probably carcinogenic" to humans.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched its own new study of glyphosate; results are expected soon.

"It certainly does raise the level of concern about using products like this, especially in public spaces," says Lisa Arkin, executive director of Beyond Toxics, an advocacy group based in Eugene.

Scientific findings on chemicals evolve, Arkin notes, but historically they shift in only one direction — raising new concerns about their safety, rather than the other way around.

Jeremy Olsen, assistant director of the Eugene-based Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides, concurs that glyphosate and triclopyr are commonly used by natural resource agencies and have proven to be effective. "We don't see it as a black and white issue," he says.

They are totally different from another class of pesticides, neonicotinoids, Olsen says, which have been traced to several mass bee deaths in the Portland area.

The Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides would prefer that the city use manual methods to remove invasives, but understands that may not be feasible at a huge property like Forest Park, says Sharon Selvaggio, the organization's healthy wildlife and water program director, based in Portland.

Only 25 percent of glyphosate is left in the soil after 20 days, she says, and 25 percent of triclopyr is left after 54 days.

The main danger to humans appears to be for farmers and herbicide applicators who use it regularly, and are more likely to get non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer, Selvaggio says.

But there's been very little research on combinations of chemicals, Olsen says.

New take on invasives

Tao Orion, a Cottage Grove expert in permaculture, opposes the use of herbicides on public lands, and thinks they should be managed much like organic farms. In addition to the link with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, Orion argues that glyphosate alters the mineral composition of soil, and has been shown to lead to more botulism, tetanus and salmonella in cows and chickens.

Orion, who wrote the new book "Beyond the War on Invasive Species," takes issue with public lands managers who think they can go back to some prior period when only "native plants" flourished.

"I would argue there's no going back," she says, and that public land managers need to accept that natural areas evolve.

Reed says the International Agency for Research on Cancer findings were based on old science, and didn't cause him to change his opinion on glyphosate and triclopyr. Since that report came out, he says, the European Union completed a four-year look at glyphosate. "They did not find evidence of carcinogenicity," he says.

No pesticides are totally safe, but glyphosate has a "low, low, low toxic profile for humans and implications for wildlife," says Dave Stone, a pesticide toxicologist at Oregon State University and director of the National Pesticide Information Center, funded by the EPA.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer evaluates chemicals for their hazardous properties, not based on the actual risk of using them, Stone says.

Stone, who lives in Sellwood, says what the Parks Bureau plans to do in Forest Park is relatively safe, because the application there is "very far removed from occupational exposures" that cause the most concerns. Glyphosate doesn't cross into human skin or the lungs, he says. The main way humans get exposed is if they eat something with the residue left on the leaves.

The Parks Bureau will keep people out of areas being sprayed until it's safe, says Reed, who notes that Portland Parks & Recreation is the nation's only parks system certified as Salmon-Safe.

"We're leaving ourselves a wide margin of safety," Reed says. Besides, he adds, there's no question that it's the invasives causing massive environmental degradation at Forest Park.

Final reservoir vote set for Wednesday

*By Jim Redden
August 17, 2015*

The City Council is expected to take the final vote to authorize the Water Bureau to decommission the three open reservoirs in Mount Tabor on Wednesday.

The council is scheduled to vote on the legal findings to support the bureau's application for a land use change to do the required work. The council previously approved a plan negotiated between the bureau and the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association (MTNA) to restore and preserve the reservoirs in their historic condition after they are disconnected from the water distribution system.

Disconnecting the reservoirs will involve excavations and other work at 11 locations within Mount Tabor. Among other things, dozens of trees will be removed, trenches will be dug to reach underground pipes, pipes will be cut and plugged, valves will be installed, and new above ground utility vaults will be built.

For a map of the work, go [here](#).

The bureau says the work is necessary to comply with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules intended to prevent the spread of water-borne illnesses. The council has promised the EPA the work will be completed by the end of the year.

The cost of the work is estimated at \$7.4 million, including planning, design and construction.

Many activists and neighborhood residents believe the open reservoirs are safe and should not be altered. The MTNA prefers they remain the same and only worked on the preservation plan because that is what the council said it would consider.

If the council approves the findings, some activists are considering challenging the land use change before the state Land Use Board of Appeals. Such an appeal would not prevent the work from proceeding unless LUBA rules against the city, however.

The council is scheduled to consider the findings at 11:00 a.m. on Aug. 19. The findings will be released to the public on Tuesday, Aug. 18.