

## The Oregonian

### Portland development board approves Natural Grocers, MLK project

*By Andrew Theen  
August 19, 2015*

The Portland Development Commission approved a deal Wednesday that could bring a Natural Grocers and other businesses to a long-vacant city lot on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard by 2017.

The board voted 4-0 to sell 1.8 acres on the corner of Northeast Alberta Street and MLK to California-based developer Majestic Realty for \$502,160. Beyond a steep discount on the land, the development agency is giving the developer a \$122,705 grant to make up for design revisions during the past year.

The commission will also take responsibility for a more than 5,000-square-foot retail space for a decade, with the aim of attracting minority-owned businesses.

The deal isn't without financial risk for the agency. Overseeing the space could cost \$700,000 to \$2.3 million, according to city documents. The city is also chipping in \$500,000 to help reduce rents and make tenant improvements in the space.

Still, commissioners and members of the public applauded the vote, more than a year after Trader Joe's withdrew a plan to open a store on the site.

Commissioners thanked Majestic Realty for sticking with the project.

Phillip Brown, Majestic Realty's vice president of acquisitions and development, in turn, thanked the commission. "Going through four and a half years," he said, referring back to the start of talks, "I really believe we brought the best product to the site."

Commission Chair Tom Kelly said he's excited for the development. "It is kind of historic no matter what anybody says. It's great to have this in place."

The vote came two days after Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Dan Saltzman held a joint press conference to celebrate a new affordable housing project proposal on another city property one mile south of the Natural Grocers site.

That development will likely benefit from at least \$4.5 million in urban renewal dollars, part of some \$20 million in additional funds that were promised in light of the Trader Joe's fallout and the call for more affordable housing in North and Northeast Portland.

Once completed, city officials and neighborhood advocates said the Northeast Portland development will bring much needed foot traffic to the neighboring Vanport Square businesses. The estimated \$9.5 million construction project will also provide \$87,000 in annual property taxes.

The store should provide 25 jobs, as well as free nutrition classes and other services for the neighborhood.

Not everyone is thrilled with the community benefits agreement hashed out by the grocery, the developer, construction company and the neighborhood. Cameron Herrington, who participated in the community meetings, said the community had "zero leverage" over those three interest groups.

He said the plan "fails to provide community benefits commensurate with the public investment made in the project," noting the city wasn't able to require Natural Grocers to agree to minority hiring targets for the store, and the plan does little for displaced residents.

Commissioner Willy Myers said the plan isn't set in stone and will continue to evolve prior to construction. "I hope that you stay engaged in the process," he said to Herrington.

Majestic is receiving a significant discount on the land, which was valued at \$2.9 million in 2012. That appraisal was based on the "highest and best use" for the land, a mixed-use development. City officials said that wasn't feasible because of the constraints of the land, including a large easement that makes development difficult.

Commissioner Tavo Cruz Jr. asked whether the city had conducted another appraisal since 2012, and development officials said they had not.

Colas Construction will serve as the general contractor on the 15,000-square-foot grocery store and 10,000 square feet of additional business space.

Aneshka Dickson, vice president of Colas Construction and a member of the development board, did not attend the meeting.

Construction could begin in the spring of 2016.

## **Portland officials announce \$1 million strategy to help homeless**

*By Andrew Theen  
August 20, 2015*

Portland will spend \$924,000 this year to reach out to the city's most vulnerable homeless people with the goal of getting at least 50 off the streets.

Mayor Charlie Hales announced at a City Hall news conference Thursday that the city is contracting with Cascadia Behavioral Health, the Urban League of Portland and the Native American Rehabilitation Association to provide on-the-ground support. The social service providers will focus on the most chronically homeless, with an emphasis on African Americans and people suffering from mental illness.

The city also plans a new hotline and two day use storage units for homeless people.

The social service agencies will work alongside the Portland Police Bureau, starting as soon as next month.

The announcement comes one month after the Portland Business Alliance called on the city and Multnomah County to spend more on homeless services, beef up enforcement and provide more shelter beds.

Hales described Portland's homelessness issues as a "tragedy" that creates "appalling" situations for those on the streets, and visible – and unpleasant -- side effects for everyone else. He said the city is already enforcing the law and "cannot simply chase this problem around with law enforcement."

But the mayor said his spending plan, approved in the 2015-16 budget, won't begin to address most of the more than 2,000 people sleeping outside in Multnomah County.

"We need more funding for shelters and for bed spaces," Hales said. "We need more affordable housing. We need more mental health care."

Marc Jolin, initiative director for a Home for Everyone, said the social service providers and police already know the population they're targeting. And offering social services, public safety resources and behavioral health programs for those people already costs money for every agency, in terms of worker hours. "We haven't been able to help them be successful with those piecemeal efforts," Jolin said.

Better coordination and a significant up-front investment by the city could help turn the tide, Jolin said. "Once we've helped them get into housing all of those other costs that were have been incurring go away."

Portland will also start a hotline in October for the public to report "behavior-based issues," such as blocking public spaces, or tents or structures in prominent areas.

Also that month, the city will open two-day storage units for people to leave their shopping carts and belongings while they look for housing or work. Josh Alpert, Hales' chief of staff, said each unit could accommodate belongings of 45 to 65 people.

The 53-foot units are an example of Hales' push to find cost-effective solutions to some of the day to day crises facing the homeless.

He wants to open one site under the west side of the Burnside Bridge and another in the Central Eastside Industrial District. The units will be open 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Portland has proposed moving the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp to the Central Eastside. Hales said the group might operate one of the units.

"Any reasonable person is going to acknowledge that we already have a lot of street homelessness in both places," Hales said when asked about possible public backlash. "Having someplace for people to leave their cart or leave their things or use a restroom is better than the status quo."

## Portland extends Uber, Lyft test run

*By Elliot Njus  
August 19, 2015*

Portland is extending a trial run for ride-hailing startups Uber and Lyft while the city contemplates new rules to regulate internet-age transportation companies.

The Portland City Council on Thursday will hear recommendations from a task force assembled to come up with rules for so-called "transportation network companies" like Uber and Lyft while also rewriting regulations for traditional taxicabs.

But Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees the Portland Bureau of Transportation, isn't ready to propose final rules. In a letter sent to taxi companies and the ride-hailing startups earlier this month, he outlined lingering questions about insurance coverage and wheelchair-accessible service.

"I don't believe that all of these issues can be fully addressed and resolved by the end of the pilot period, making it difficult to propose final ... regulations," Novick wrote.

The delay will give the city time to compile data collected during the initial test period. And it will give Uber and Lyft more time to recruit users in Portland, further establishing the companies as part of the city's transportation ecosystem.

Traditional taxicab companies have argued that they provide the same service as Uber and Lyft and differ only in how they make money, and therefore that Uber and Lyft should be similarly regulated. Taxi companies, for example, are required to provide 24-hour service across the entire city, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles when requested.

Those services aren't always profitable, but the taxi industry has historically been protected by a cap on taxi licenses. Portland's interim rules effectively lifted the cap on the number of taxis while placing new restrictions on Uber and Lyft, including that they provide wheelchair-accessible service.

Those companies, as well as their users, say the conventional rules shouldn't apply in the age of the "sharing economy," where online platforms connect individuals to do business with one another instead of established and heavily regulated corporation (albeit as a less heavily regulated corporation takes a cut).

Although it won't vote on final rules Thursday, the council has set aside three hours to hear the recommendations and take public comment. It meets at 2 p.m. at Portland City Hall, 1221 S.W. Fourth Ave.

## The Portland Tribune

### New city homeless initiatives focus on 'intensive' help

*By Jim Redden  
August 20, 2015*

City, county and social service leaders announced new initiatives to better help those most in need in Portland on Thursday.

The initiatives include a High-Intensity Street Engagement effort between the city of Portland and Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare to focus housing placement and retention efforts, including culturally specific wraparound services, for people who need the greatest amount of support. It will start in September.

The program will include other service providers, such as the Urban League of Portland and the Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest. The Neighborhood Response Team of the Portland Police Bureau will work with the service providers as well.

The initiatives were announced at a City Hall press conference attended by Mayor Charlie Hales, Housing Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey, and Dr. Derald Walker, chief executive officer, Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare.

"This is about focusing our services to those residents most at-risk, those most in need of housing and services," said Hales. "Thanks to our partners, the service providers, we will look to find services for those homeless Portlanders who require more intensive assistance.

"First, we'll find services for people. Then we'll address illegal camp sites," Hales continued. "'Services first,' though, is the key."

"By coordinating services, this model uniquely tailors engagement, interventions and ongoing critical resources that are specifically designed for the individual," said Walker. "It wraps around healthcare and housing benefits to provide the essentials in life to some of the most vulnerable folks within our community that the rest of us often take for granted. Cascadia is honored to partner with the City of Portland and so many high quality service organization towards this aim."

The initiative will cost \$924,000. One-time general fund dollars for it were included in the city budget that took effect July 1. The goal is for Cascade Behavioral Health to serve 50 families this first year. If successful, Hale will propose making it an ongoing item in future budget.

The press conference was held a few weeks after a petition drive supported by the Portland Business Alliance that urged city leaders to do something about the increasing number of homeless people and camps in Portland.

Two other programs by the city also were announced Thursday:

? The city will introduce a one-point contact system for residents who want to report behavior-based issues such as illegal activity or people blocking public space. The city will provide a phone number, email address and texting address that residents can use to report problems for all sites within the city, regardless of which agency owns them. That program will debut in October.

? Day Storage Pilot Program: Portland is about to unveil two storage sites, on the east and west side, which houseless people may use to leave their belongings for the day. The facilities will be staffed by outreach workers and will include storage space, toilets, sharps containers, and a kiosk of information from service providers. That program also will debut in October.

For a fact sheet about the initiatives, go [here](#).

The city and county are currently working together to provide housing for hundreds of homeless vets in 2015.

## **For whom the fare tolls**

*By Steve Law  
August 20, 2015*

More than 1,200 Portland taxi drivers' livelihoods are on the line, plus those of hundreds more new drivers for Uber and Lyft, when the Portland City Council takes up deregulating Portland's taxi industry August 20.

The decision may rest with Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioners Steve Novick and Dan Saltzman, the council majority who voted in April to allow San Francisco-based Uber and Lyft into the market in a four-month pilot project. Though all three city leaders have voiced concerns about the welfare of taxi drivers, the pilot project flooded the market with hundreds of amateur drivers and slashed taxi drivers' pay, enabling Uber and Lyft to quickly seize half the local market share.

Now the council will consider permanently deregulating the industry, under terms suggested by a citizen task force picked by Novick, the city commissioner in charge of transportation.

"I just wish we'd get a fair shake at City Hall," says Darin Campbell, a Radio Cab driver and elected representative of Portland's taxi drivers.

But many cab drivers and taxi company owners sense the die is cast, and some drivers have jumped ship to Uber and Lyft, which allow anyone to turn their personal car into a taxi "hailed" by customers on smartphones.

At a July 15 City Council hearing to evaluate the pilot project midstream, many taxi drivers testified their wages were down 30 to 50 percent, while many Uber and Lyft drivers testified about how well they were doing.

Uber driver David Holmquist, age 70, said he was earning \$23 an hour, while Jan Weston, who was driving for both companies, said he was making \$35 an hour. The average Uber driver in Portland is “taking home” more than three times what the average taxi driver makes according to a city study, testified Brooke Steger, Uber’s general manager for the Northwest.

Such talk, and the findings of that 2012 city study, could give political cover to city commissioners who say they support taxi drivers, many of them immigrants, yet want to accommodate citizens and business groups who are clamoring for lower-cost taxi services available in private cars at the push of a smartphone button.

### **Study disputed**

The 2012 study, conducted by the city Revenue Bureau, concluded the average taxi driver wage in Portland was only \$6.22 an hour. That’s below minimum wage, but most Portland taxi drivers are independent contractors, aren’t protected by Oregon’s minimum wage law, and don’t qualify for most employee benefits. The Revenue Bureau heard complaints from many taxi drivers that they have to shell out \$500 a week for “kitties” — payments to taxi companies to cover operating costs — and have to work well more than 40 hours to feed their families.

But many people say the city study was politically motivated and grossly underestimated cabbies’ pay.

Then-mayor Sam Adams commissioned the study in 2011, after disgruntled Broadway Cab drivers complained about their pay and working conditions. The cabbies wanted city approval for 50 new taxi permits so they could launch a new driver-owned company, Union Cab.

“There was an agenda, to improve the lot of the drivers who were complaining,” says Frank Dufay, who recently retired as administrator of the city’s taxi regulatory program. “The reality was it was Union drivers who were promoting the survey,” Dufay says, and the findings were “overstated.”

“They were trying to make Broadway look as badly as possible,” Campbell says.

Saying the average Portland taxi driver wage was \$6.22 an hour is “an absolute joke,” he says. “I would say it’s got to be at least \$12 to \$15.”

At Radio Cab, Campbell says, the average take-home pay after expenses is around \$19 to \$20 an hour.

Broadway and Radio Cab are the two dominant cab companies in Portland, and the study noted that Radio Cab, also owned by cab drivers, paid better than the average. That would mean Broadway drivers earned less than the \$6.22 average wage after paying expenses.

“If you were consistently earning that level of pay, you would think there’s a high degree of turnover. I don’t think there is,” says Mike Wilkerson, a senior economist at ECONorthwest.

Wilkerson and a colleague recently completed a Portland taxi market study on behalf of EcoCab, a new company in the market that promises to pay drivers \$10 an hour plus a share of taxi fares.

The average tenure of Broadway Cab drivers is about 4.3 years, says Raye Miles, president of the Portland taxi company.

“We questioned the veracity of that report when it came out,” Miles says. There was a broad spectrum of take-home wages in the industry, she says, but nowhere near a \$6.22-an-hour average. “It can get as low as \$8 to \$10 an hour, but I know we have drivers who make two to three times that. Honestly, if you aren’t making that much (\$8 to \$10 an hour), you want out. Why wouldn’t you?”

### **Using tax records**

The city Revenue Bureau expressed confidence in its findings because it conducted informal interviews with about 250 taxi drivers and got financial information from six taxi companies. The bureau also had access to many taxi drivers’ state and federal tax records, as those are filed along with city business tax forms when independent contractors gross more than \$50,000 a year. The Revenue Bureau found the study results were consistent with other studies around the county.

“That study seemed to reinforce what we hear from many taxi drivers,” says Bryan Hockaday, Novick’s aide who is leading the campaign to deregulate the taxi industry and accommodate Uber and Lyft.

However, Hockaday adds, "That was Sam's study."

The Revenue Bureau acknowledged that taxi drivers tend to underreport their earnings, which include tips. To compensate, city staff added 15 percent to what taxi drivers reported as their income, still leaving average wages at \$6.22.

Many say it's nigh impossible getting taxi drivers to divulge their true wages, because they collect so much cash and don't report their full earnings to the IRS and Oregon Department of Revenue.

"A lot of it is unreported income, so who knows what people are really making?" Dufay says.

"I don't know of any cab driver who will tell you the truth," says Tesfaye Aleme, managing member of Green Cab. "I don't think the study was done properly."

### **Working overtime**

Madelyn Elder, the former leader of the Communications Workers of America local that signed up Union Cab drivers as members, defends the study.

"I think it's basically correct," Elder says, "unless the cab companies underreported, and why would they do that? It makes them look bad."

Many cab drivers were working 14-hour days and seven-day weeks to stretch that \$6.22 hourly wage, Elder says.

The study counted tips, she says, if they were included on credit card payments collected by the taxi companies.

Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, supported the study at the time. But four years later, he admits that \$6.22 an hour sounds a bit "goofy."

To average that amount, for everyone earning \$10, \$15, \$20 an hour or more, there have to be even more drivers dragging down the average by making closer to \$3 an hour or so.

And the market has changed in the past four years, Chamberlain notes, with the addition of Union Cab and EcoCab, which treats drivers as employees and not independent contractors.

Taxi drivers say their pay has been understated, while Uber driver earnings are overstated because they don't take into account the costs of buying and maintaining their cars, among other expenses.

Chamberlain says he worries many of the city's 1,200 taxi driver jobs will be replaced by people driving part-time for Uber and Lyft.

"I believe this City Council really cares about low-wage workers," Chamberlain says. "If they move forward with Uber, it isn't keeping that spirit."

"Before I do anything with Uber, I'd do a new study."

### **What does the council say?**

The three Portland City Council members who approved the deregulation pilot project have all made statements of concern about taxi worker livelihoods:

Mayor Charlie Hales, commenting to the Portland Tribune editorial board about all the Muslim immigrants who drive taxis, and what might happen as the city deregulates to accommodate Uber and Lyft:

*"Do we completely pull the rug out from under them? Do we drop their average wage \$5 an hour? All hell could break loose."*

Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick, at a July 15 City Council hearing:

*"I want to have more information about the impact on and the welfare of drivers."*

*"I understand that taxi drivers have taken a hit."*

In a June 17 news release:

*"My own instinct is that drivers — both taxi and (Uber and Lyft) drivers — would be better off if they could obtain the protections and benefits of employees."*

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, at an April 9 public hearing:

*Worried that Uber and Lyft will cause a “race to the bottom” on taxi wages. “In this unregulated frontier that we’re being asked to go to, there seems to be a real chance of that happening.”*

### **What city councilors have said about taxi drivers**

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#### **Mayor Charlie Hales**

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## **Uber, Lyft get four more months on Portland streets**

*By Steve Law  
August 20, 2015*

The city of Portland will extend its four-month pilot project in taxi deregulation another four months, Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick said Thursday.

The pilot project enabled Uber and Lyft to enter the market in April, and the companies have since flooded the market with about 2,500 taxis operated by mostly amateur drivers using their own cars, with customers hailing rides via smartphone.

The City Council on Thursday heard a final report from a task force appointed by Novick that recommended permanent measures to deregulate the taxi industry. The task force recommended lifting caps on the number of taxis allowed to operate in town and suggested subsidies for taxis that serve customers in wheelchairs, among other features.

But Novick said he wasn’t quite ready to move forward.

“There are issues that I still want to explore,” said Novick, who took over regulation of the industry several months ago when that responsibility was shifted from the Revenue Bureau to the Portland Bureau of Transportation, which he oversees.

Novick said he’s “uneasy” that Uber and Lyft raise their rates — so-called surge pricing — in the early hours of the morning when there are no alternative ways for people to get around.

And he said he wants to help taxi companies that invested in new wheelchair-accessible vehicles, as required by the city before deregulation, but now find those uneconomical to operate. The hardest-hit company is Green Cab, which bought 13 wheelchair-accessible vehicles costing \$37,000 to \$41,000 each, to comply with a city requirement that 20 percent of each taxi company fleet be so equipped.

Now the city is poised to dump that requirement and substitute a minimum response time for all companies, taxis and Uber and Lyft, to pick up people in wheelchairs. Taxi companies aren't allowed to charge more for people in wheelchairs, so it's hard to recoup the costs of those specially equipped vehicles.

"I think that is a legitimate fairness concern," Novick said. "This is an argument that kind of tears at my heartstrings a little bit."

As the city extends its pilot project, it will step up enforcement of its conditions, Novick said.

One of those was that Uber and Lyft offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles throughout the city around the clock, which neither company has consistently done.

Brooke Steger, Uber general manager for the Northwest, said Portland is its first market in the world where it has enlisted drivers with vehicles equipped to carry passengers with wheelchair lifts. However, the company has signed up only four such drivers; the remaining services are provided on contract with another company.

Early data from the pilot project showed that Uber quickly moved into a dominant position here, capturing, along with Lyft, more than half the local market.

Steger said the San Francisco-based company has signed on more than 2,000 drivers in Portland. The Department of Revenue reported that 10 individuals filed for new business licenses in the taxi and related industry in March. But in April, when the pilot project began, that jumped to 462 people, then 510 in May, 738 in June and 865 in July. The bulk of those are new Uber drivers.

There are about 1,200 regular taxi drivers in the city of Portland.

The city also reported that in June, regular taxis supplied 80 percent of all the rides for people in wheelchairs, while Uber and Lyft provided the remaining 20 percent, mostly from companies on contract with the two Bay area companies. However, the city didn't count rides that are scheduled in advance, and taxi companies supply the overwhelming share of those.

Darin Campbell, a Radio Cab driver who is the elected representative of the city's traditional taxi drivers, said he's hearing every day of taxi drivers and even Uber drivers who are leaving the field because they're getting less work as the number of drivers keeps growing, leaving less money to go around per driver.

"It's oversaturation of the market," Campbell said. The result will be more turnover and more part-time, rookie drivers on the streets, he said.

Campbell called on Portland to be the first city in the world to put a cap on the number of Uber and Lyft drivers it allows.

After the hearing, Steger disputed Campbell's contention that Uber was losing many of its drivers. "We have not seen that in any way," she said.

But there are signs that the increase in Uber and Lyft drivers is taking a bigger toll on taxi drivers income.

Radio Cab, one of the two dominant taxi companies in Portland along with Broadway Cab, earlier reported that its revenue was down 6 percent to 8 percent in May compared to last year. "Now it's down more, probably more like 15 or 20 percent," said Steven Entler, Radio Cab general manager.

The City Council, after hearing more than three hours of testimony, agreed Thursday to continue its public hearing on taxi deregulation next Wednesday, Aug. 26, at 2 p.m.

A final report on the pilot project is expected in October.

## **Council votes to decommission Mt. Tabor reservoirs**

*By Jim Redden  
August 19, 2015*

The City Council took what could be the final vote to decommission the three open reservoirs in Mt. Tabor on Wednesday.

The council approved legal findings drafted by the City Attorney's Office to support the Water Bureau's request for a land use change to do the work necessary to disconnect the reservoirs from the water distribution system.

"We appreciate Portland City Council's decision to approve the Land Use application. This is a step forward in an extensive process that will provide the Water Bureau with the legal authority to decommission the open reservoirs at Mt. Tabor, thereby meeting modern public health and safety practices and standards, complying with federal and state drinking water regulations, making the water system more reliable, resilient and secure," David Shaff, the outgoing bureau administrator said after the vote.

The bureau will now seek the permits to do the work, which will take place at 11 location around the reservoirs. Among other things, a dozen 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. The bureau will also plant 30 trees in Mount Tabor Park to help replace those that are removed.

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

The project is expected to cost \$7.4 million.

The council previously approved a plan negotiated between the Portland Water Bureau and the Mount Tabor Neighborhood Association to restore and preserve the reservoirs in their historic condition. It will cost an estimated \$4 million, and possibly \$1.5 million more if newer lighting is replaced at one of the reservoirs.

"The Water Bureau team, they sat down with the group and they went with an open mind and an open heart. I think what they achieved is a real breakthrough," said Commissioner Nick Fish, who is in charge of the bureau.

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.

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. Some critics are considering challenging the council vote before the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **What You Need to Know About Mayor Charlie Hales' New Initiative On Homelessness**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
August 20, 2015*

You've been on pins and needles all afternoon, Blogtown, so here's what we know about the new \$1 million homelessness initiative Mayor Charlie Hales unveiled today (along with City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey, police officials and social service providers):

It looks largely like he said it would: As I noted earlier, Hales allocated more than \$1 million to an "intensive street engagement and clean-up initiative" in this year's budget, and laid out a bare bones description of what it would amount to.

That's all on the table. The mayor's pitching a pilot program that resembles an effort the city tried late last year with people sleeping under I-405. The city will spend \$924,000 launching a small army of social service workers—from Cascadia Behavioral Health, the Urban League of Portland, and the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA)—at the people "who have the greatest barriers to housing," by which he means the people most likely to tell social service workers to screw off.

Hales and his various partners in this effort make the case these organizations are uniquely qualified to tackle this issue. They say the Urban League and NARA can marshal outreach workers more likely to identify with people with backgrounds and racial demographics that might make them distrustful of white people.

On top of all this, money's going to Central City Concern, which will be running "cleanup routes" five days a week, according to Hales' chief of staff, Josh Alpert.

All those resources are actually going to target a tiny fraction of Portland's homeless. The goal for the pilot project is that 50 "households" find housing—a tiny number compared to the thousands of people sleeping on the street. I asked about that number, and Hales launched into a defense you got the sense he'd prepared. "You might say 'That's a pretty expensive effort, to focus almost \$1 million of services on 50 households,'" Hales said, pivoting to the cleanup efforts under I-405 last year. "When we focused that effort onto some of the key individuals on the street, not only were those folks housed, the side effects of those folks having large encampments went away."

"It's expensive," Hales continued, "but not compared to the alternative."

There are some new twists. Hales is promising two new daytime storage sites where homeless people can leave their stuff—one under the Burnside Bridge, the other on the Central Eastside. The storage areas will have dumpsters, a large cargo box, and a sharps container for used needles—what the mayor calls "very basic humane services."

The sites have firm costs estimates (\$50,000 overhead, \$5,600 a month for operations) but the exact location remains in question—particularly the Central Eastside site. In fact, Hales' office is already sparring with businesses and neighbors in that district over the proposed move of homeless rest area Right 2 Dream Too. It could be in for a similar fight in its ambitions for a storage area, but Hales correctly pointed out there's already plenty of homelessness in the district, and that a trash repository and storage area is "better than the status quo. We're going to keep moving by increments to a place where people have sanitation and habitation."

The mayor's got someone you can call about homelessness besides his office. As you well know, the Mercury's fond of tedium, and so periodically sifts through the transcribed voicemail messages left with the mayor's office. They are invariably full of people mortified by some encampment or another.

Now, in a stroke of maybe-genius, Hales has a better number for them to call. He's conceived a "one-point contact system" where "the public can report behavior-based issues associated with the houseless population." Basically, you'll be calling a guy in the city's Office of Management and Finance (OMF) who already pulls the strings on the city's campsite cleanup program.

Speaking of which, none of this alters current enforcement. Hales made that clear. Police will still sweep problem camps. City bureaus will still call in private contractors and inmates to clear out rubbish, and nothing about this new pilot even reaches the problematic sites near the Springwater Corridor multi-use path.

Hales made a point of saying multiple times that "sleeping is not a crime," without touching the fact that, under city law, camping and erecting structures in order to sleep is a crime, and the city's been known to arrest people for it. (City staffers frequently draw a distinction between "entrenched" or problematic camps and more "low impact" sites when talking about which campers are ticketed.)

Veterans are taken care of, officials say.

This may not last. The \$1 million the mayor allocated to this project was one-time money, and Hales was clear today that it's a "pilot project." No guarantee it's going to continue beyond this fiscal year (ending in June).

Hales is dusting off his stump speech. He took a couple moments before broaching the main point this afternoon to tick off a list you're likely to hear a lot of as May approaches. He said there are things that keep him up at night, but they're not opportunity in the city (new jobs!), or the budget (\$49 million surplus this year, much of it not directly attributable to city officials!), or police use of force (it's way down, he says!). "Those things don't keep me up, anymore," Hales said today. "Homelessness does."

It was a savvy and brief digression, at a time Hales is clearly focusing on the political landscape in next year's mayoral primary. As first reported by the Oregonian today, the mayor had coffee with State Treasurer Ted Wheeler this morning. Wheeler's looking at a run at the mayor's seat, and polling indicates the former Multnomah County chair could be a strong challenger.

"We talked about all kinds of things including politics," said Hales, who wasn't giving up any easy information about the meeting. I asked if he asked Wheeler to coffee because of his potential political ambitions, and Hales said yes, though he said he didn't learn Wheeler's intentions. "It was a very friendly conversation."

## Mayor Charlie Hales Will Unveil His Latest Homeless Outreach Idea Today

By Dirk VanderHart  
August 20, 2015

A couple days ago, a picture was ricocheting around Twitter of two people having sex in a doorway on the North Park Blocks. I'm not gonna post it. You can imagine what it looked like.

It's an unwelcome image, obviously—both because it's not a good thing for people to be having sex in public in broad daylight, and because it's the sort of thing that can be used to leverage an outsized hysterical response to the visible homelessness that's been so prevalent in Portland of late. That homelessness hasn't been eradicated or made less visible by the weeks of sweeps Portland police carried out earlier this summer, even if it has been pushed around some.

There's not enough affordable housing. There's not enough shelter space. Lots of people don't have another place to go. The sweeps the city's carried out this year have focused on "low-impact" homelessness—convincing people not to put down roots, but instead pick up their belongings and move along come morning. Even if it worked in its limited range (I've not seen proof either way), the problem festers.

So you should pay attention to an announcement Mayor Charlie Hales is planning early this afternoon. For months, the mayor's office has said the city needs a new tack for dealing with homelessness. Hales has been pushing to move the self-managed homeless rest area Right 2 Dream Too out of downtown and into the Central Eastside (and been met with stiff resistance), and has said he'd consider allowing more organized camps around town.

The mayor's also put major money toward something that's only been vaguely outlined so far—and which sources say he's planning to fill out later today. As part of this year's budget, Hales gave more than \$1 million in one-time money to the Portland Housing Bureau, for what he called an "intensive street engagement and clean-up initiative." Here's how the city's adopted budget describes it:

*The initiative will fund services provided by community-based organizations. Mobile trash pick-up will account for approximately \$101,306 to fund a full-time two-person crew, as well as materials and supplies. The remaining \$923,694 will support a collaboration between police and social service providers. This collaboration proposes to serve 50 households through three housing placement staff (\$195,000), housing subsidies (\$500,000), and additional support services (\$228,694).*

Hales and his staff have offered a few more details in the past, suggesting that the city should be more actively aiming social services at problem camps. Mayoral staffers have also said targeting people who are "ringleaders" of problem camps for intensive services like housing placement could help disperse the city's largest homeless camps. Portland has thousands of homeless people, so 50 households isn't much, but it'll be interesting to hear what Hales has up his sleeve—and how this new effort will commune with run of the mill police enforcement and the city's ongoing campsite cleanup program, which is in the midst of changes of its own.

Hales is planning to appear today with Derald Walker, CEO of Cascade Behavioral Health. A press release from the mayor's office says: "The new partnership is designed to focus services for some of the city's most at-risk community members."

## Portland's Police Reform Watchdogs Still Haven't Found a Suitable Office—And That Might Push Them Over Budget

By Dirk VanderHart  
August 20, 2015

It's looking more and more like Portland's unique, fragile system for watchdogging federally mandated police reforms could creep past the constraints of its budget. One main reason: The team that's helping oversee those reforms still hasn't found a suitable place to work, nine months after winning the job.

As the Mercury reported back in March, a group of Chicago-based researchers and local support staff known as the Compliance Officer and Community Liaison (COCL) team quietly moved its offices from a community center toward the eastern edge of town to the same building where the Portland Police Bureau's traffic division is headquartered.

That raised ire and eyebrows. The people who are watching the city's efforts to improve how police handle mental health situations—a group called the Community Oversight Advisory Board (COAB)—worried having supposedly independent watchdogs working near cops could dissuade open interaction with citizens, and sent a bad message.

Remember, the city's in the midst of settling a 2012 lawsuit filed by the US Department of Justice, and accusing Portland cops of disproportionately beating up people with mental health problems. The COCL team was created by that settlement (and caused outcry last year when a team from Chicago got the gig rather than local candidates).

The group is supposed to be independent of the city. Portland City Council even passed an ordinance in January that said "the COCL... requires office space which is not in a city building," then promptly forgot all about that part.

While the COCL's no longer in a police building, it's still in a city building. It moved to downtown's Commonwealth Building several months ago, to the same space that houses Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights.

That doesn't sit so well with the feds, who seem to be insisting that—at bare minimum—the COCL folks have a lockable door separating their workspace from city employees.

"The settlement agreement requires that the COCL be independent of any city office," Deputy City Attorney Ellen Osoinach told city council Wednesday afternoon. "What the DOJ is struggling with is that, to the extent we house the COCL team in a bureau office, they see tension there."

Osoinach says, though, that federal officials acknowledge that the entire reform process is in a "fragile place." Five members of the community board tasked with holding the cops' feet to the fire have dropped out, and everyone involved is working far more hours than they were told to expect. Kathleen Saadat, who leads the COCL's day-to-day efforts in Portland, called the workload "overwhelming."

What's all this have to do with the budget?

City commissioners on Wednesday afternoon heard from COCL members, who are asking for changes to their contract with the city. Those tweaks include paying members of the COCL team tens of thousands of new dollars—largely because they're taking on more responsibility.

Estimated costs for the team are still below the city's budgeted \$725,000 for the year, but mayoral policy adviser Deanna Wesson-Mitchell suggested that could change in several months, since it looks like the city either has to move the COCL team to a suitable spot, or complete an "office build-out," which she said could cost \$35,000.

"We're not asking for a change in the budget yet," Mayor Charlie Hales clarified to his colleagues (foreshadowing!). Expect to hear more about this during this fall's bump—that's shorthand for "budget monitoring process"—a twice-yearly event where the city recalibrates its expenses and doles out any extra money it finds.

Another issue presenting unexpected costs: A number of focus groups for targeting smaller populations (LGBT community, racial and ethnic minorities, people with mental health issues) who can't be isolated in the type of mass surveys that usually gauge a citizenry's feelings about cops.

Those focus groups drew some lively interactions between Saadat and Dan Saltzman, who wanted to know what LGBT folks and racial minorities had to do with the cops beating up people with mental health problems.

"I'm just afraid it becomes focus groups run amok," Saltzman said. Pretty much no one agreed with him.

"If an officer approaches a person who they think has a mental health problem, it is important for us to notice that those people don't all look, behave, or respond alike," Saadat said in response to the concerns. "Some of the behaviors and responses are tied to ethnic background, age, etc. If we hear from these groups, maybe we learn something."

## Uncertain Terms

### City Doesn't Have the Records You Want? Ask Them to Look Again

*By Dirk VanderHart  
August 19, 2015*

PEMBINA PIPELINE wanted to show Mayor Charlie Hales Portland's propane future.

It was April 14, and the Canadian company's plans for a \$500 million export terminal in North Portland had just won the favor of the city's Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC). With the matter set to go before Portland City Council, Pembina thought Hales should see the Port of Portland terminal where the biggest private investment in city history would sit.

"We held off offering a site tour of Terminal 6 for Mayor Hales and city commissioners until after the PSC voted, but now would like to extend such an offer," Pembina lobbyist Gary Conkling wrote to mayoral policy staffer Jackie Dingfelder on the morning of April 14. "Do you have a free moment to talk about this?"

As lobbying communications go, the email's dull. It's what the message revealed about public records access in the city that's noteworthy.

Earlier this month, the mayor's office responded to a public records request from the Mercury by claiming it had no record Conkling ever sent an email to Dingfelder on April 14. After being supplied with proof of the email's existence, Hales' staff reversed course, saying they'd turned it up after all.

It wasn't an isolated reversal. According to Hales' chief spokesman Dana Haynes, the hiccup with the Mercury's request was the second such incident that week alone.

"All government searches are done by people," Haynes says. "You get the results you get. We try to get all the documents. We assume we get all the documents."

That's a worrying statement. In the case of Conkling's invitation, there were independent records confirming the email existed, and Conkling readily sent the Mercury a copy when asked.

Situations like that aren't the norm. Often, members of the public seeking communications to and from public employees can only offer parameters for their requests—things like dates or people involved—and trust that all the records will be produced. It's clear that's not necessarily the case with the Mayor's office.

"If it was an important, weighty [email]," Haynes concedes, "that would have been really problematic."

The scenario surprised people both in and out of city hall. Staffers in city commissioners' offices said they take pains to be thorough when requests for staff emails come in. Same thing in county government.

"For Multnomah County, transparency is at a premium," says Dave Austin, the county's chief spokesman. "Public records law is very clear, and if something is public in our email system it can be found right away and turned over to anyone who requests it."

Haynes blames the inconsistency on the city's relatively recent switch to Office 365, a subscription service from Microsoft. The city couldn't say exactly what the system costs each year, but it's at least \$382,000 to give all city employees bare-bones access. Many employees use more expensive plans.

"We have had more problems with our searches," Haynes says. "I've done searches from my computer at one point and got nothing, waited five minutes and done the exact same search and came up with something."

In the case of the missing Conkling email, Haynes says Dingfelder searched her emails and turned up nothing. When shown that the email existed, the mayor's office asked the city's Bureau of Technology Services to search the city's records archives.

In fact, Portland's Office of Management and Finance (OMF), which includes the city's IT staff, says problems might arise from the way the mayor's office stores its records. Mayoral staffers frequently back up emails on the city's archive system—known as TRIM—something other offices say they do relatively rarely.

"It sounds to me like the issue is not Office 365 as much as that the mayor's office archives their email not in Outlook, but in the city's archive system," says OMF spokeswoman Jen Clodius. "Frankly, I find that system problematic."

To recap: If you request an email record from the City of Portland, you're potentially running up against a new system the mayor's office says is buggy, and an official archives system the city's management office says is problematic.

City hall staffers asked about Office 365 confirm there were issues with the software at the outset, but say that those have largely disappeared. And Jenifer Johnston, a deputy city attorney who handles matters related to records requests, suggests problems have arisen largely because people aren't sure how best to phrase records searches. She notes the city is providing training every month for people who work with public records.

"Process improvement is an ongoing process," she says. "It's not like I can tell you that we've got it now—it's all fixed."

There's a new effort underway to improve things. According to Haynes, the mayor's office came up with a fresh strategy for fielding records requests after the Mercury raised concerns: It will forward all requests for public email records to the City Attorney's Office.

"If they get glitches, they're going to monitor the glitches," Haynes says. "I'm not gonna do it on my computer."

## Hall Monitor

### If We Build It, Will They Come?

*By Dirk VanderHart*  
*August 19, 2015*

MOST OF the motorists traveling NE MLK on Monday must have thought it odd: a cluster of people in suits, sitting in the middle of a sun-scalded field as temps stretched toward 90 degrees.

The distance would have made it impossible to recognize the mayor and various other dignitaries collected there. Their brief remarks, over a microphone that threatened squealing feedback with each consonant, would have been lost to the hum of traffic.

One guy honked a couple times. He, at least, saw the gathering for what it was: A hopeful, halting beginning to amends for decades of injustice.

African American Portlanders have long been sent packing from the neighborhoods around that field at the corner of MLK and Cook. First those neighborhoods were starved of resources, then teeming gentrifiers began driving property values sky high. The narrative is commonplace by now.

In many respects, so was the announcement officials had come to deliver on August 17: The long-vacant city-owned lot will soon be turned over to private ownership free of cost, and at least \$4.5 million in city funds will be spent on up to 70 low-income apartments. That's what the Portland Housing Bureau does.

What the housing bureau does not do—what no one's even sure it can do—is try to ensure its projects benefit the very people Portland's checkered past has so specifically wronged. This is the vision for that MLK field, and hopefully more fields to come. "Even though this is just one site, it is the beginning," said Maxine Fitzpatrick, executive director of Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, the affordable housing provider the city's selected to own and operate the new project. "What happened in the past does not have to continue into the future."

You'll recall how this effort began. In 2013, the Portland Development Commission floated a deal to hand over another piece of land—down the road at NE MLK and Alberta—at a steep discount, to make way for a Trader Joe's. Outcry followed, and Trader Joe's—ever wary of controversy tarnishing the zest and crunch of its pricey cashew snacks—pulled out. (A Natural Grocers will open instead.)

The whole thing was a much-needed slap in the face to a city used to acknowledging past wrongs, but struggling to atone for them. Before long, Mayor Charlie Hales had scrounged \$20 million for housing and anti-displacement efforts in North and Northeast Portland, and formed a committee to help spend it.

It's hugely positive, but right now one of the chief ideas to come with that money brings along a lot of questions. Officials are crafting a "preference policy" that will award housing to people who can prove they've been displaced with official documents.

The problem: No one's sure whether most people can locate those documents. Even if they can, there are questions about whether people will have the resources and energy for another move.

The stakes are huge. If Portland finds an effective way to welcome back the displaced, we've just set an important and useful precedent in this growth-encumbered city.

If it fails, it's a blow to an effort that's built a lot of hope from some very raw feelings. Then again, there are more fields (fewer every year, though), and this is too important to not keep trying.