

The Oregonian

Portland's proposed demolition tax faces more changes

*By Brad Schmidt
October 14, 2015*

It's back to the proverbial workshop for Mayor Charlie Hales' proposed \$25,000 demolition tax.

After a 2½ hour City Council hearing Wednesday, essentially every aspect of the Portland tax now faces possible changes: when it would apply, how much it would cost, how exemptions or rebates would work, and how to curtail loopholes.

A new proposal isn't expected to emerge for several weeks, if not a month, Hales said.

"We'll figure out a process for figuring out that work," he said.

The revisions come amid strong pushback Wednesday from nearly all sides of the demolition debate, with many responding to a proposal released Friday by Hales' office.

State homebuilders contend the tax is illegal. A neighborhood coalition asked for a higher tax. An economist warned of unintended consequences. And neighborhood leaders worried that the tax, as worded, would promote more infill development.

Hales, responding to criticism that there hadn't been enough public process, said his latest proposal was just that – a proposal.

"I'm happy we are where we are," he said after the meeting.

It's unclear what the new tax proposal will look like.

One of the biggest sticking points has been the type of demolition that should be taxed.

Last month, Hales' office said the tax would apply to all demolitions of habitable homes on property zoned for single-family housing. That meant demolitions resulting in the construction of one new mega home or two or more homes.

But last week's plan essentially limited the tax to just one-for-one replacements, a pro-density change that Hales' office said was necessary to secure political support from the City Council.

And now?

"If we do them at all," Hales said of a tax on demolitions, "we should do them in both situations."

Price is another issue. Hales originally proposed \$25,000, plus \$25 a year for the age of a home that's demolished. The age add-on was removed last week, aide Jillian Detweiler said, because it was complicated and wouldn't result in much extra revenue.

Now, United Neighborhoods for Reform is recommending a \$35,000 tax instead.

Hales' office also rolled out a possible \$25,000 rebate last week for demolitions that lead to affordable housing or added density. Now there's talk of exempting affordable housing altogether, and ensuring that longtime homeowners hoping to build a new house on their property aren't penalized.

At the same time, officials don't want to discourage demolitions of homes in poor condition, even if they're habitable. And they don't want to create a loophole for demolitions masquerading as a remodel.

"By all means, let's not prevent some improvements," said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, later adding: "Can we tailor something that may not be one-size-fits-all?"

Meanwhile, housing economist Jerry Johnson said the \$25,000 tax wouldn't be of any consequence on demolitions leading to \$1 million homes in Eastmoreland, but it would create hardships in low-income neighborhoods.

"The way this is currently structured," he said, "there's a lot of potential for that."

Some, such as Maryhelen Kincaid, a member of Portland's Development Review Advisory Committee, said they just want an opportunity to provide suggestions.

"This all caught me by surprise," she said.

Finally, there's the tax itself.

The Oregon Home Builders Association submitted a letter Tuesday objecting, saying Portland "lacks the legal authority to impose this tax."

When City Council members asked a city attorney to address the issue during Wednesday's public session, the attorney shook his head.

Hales acknowledged that a tax, however crafted, is just one piece toward addressing Portland's housing crisis. Money from the tax would be dedicated to affordable housing.

But demolitions, while high-profile, are fairly rare: in 2014, there were 181 demolitions in neighborhoods zoned for single-family housing, according to the city.

Even so, Hales said few cities nationwide have tried to combat demolitions. Portland, he said, should try: "This is, if we do it, an innovation."

Portland OKs 90-day notice for rent increases, no-cause evictions

*By Andrew Theen
October 14, 2015*

Portland approved new rules Wednesday that require landlords to give more notice to renters when raising rents or evicting them without cause.

The City Council unanimously approved the rules, which Commissioner Dan Saltzman said don't go far enough but "provide a safety valve" for tenants facing unprecedented rent increases and low vacancy rates citywide.

During the third quarter of 2015, Portland saw 15.4 percent rent hikes and 3.2 percent vacancy levels, according to city records.

"I wish we could push these protections even further," said Commissioner Nick Fish, citing state laws that bar cities from enacting tighter rules. "Much of that is out of our control."

Starting next month, landlords will be required to give 90 days' written notice to tenants when raising rents by 5 percent or more, or when evicting residents without cause. Currently, most landlords are required to give just 30 days' notice, the state minimum, when terminating a lease or raising rent.

If landlords don't follow the rules, tenants could be owed "an amount up to three months rent as well as actual damages, reasonable attorney fees and costs," according to city documents.

Mayor Charlie Hales said Portland has to try new things. Some 200,000 new residents are expected during the next 20 years, he said. "Are we going to be San Francisco at that point or Portland? That's what these issues come down to," Hales said.

Saltzman said not all landlords are bad actors, but he thinks no-cause evictions are being "abused." He promised to return next year with a review and evaluation of the new policy.

Portland City Council accepts federal grant to send untested sexual assault kits to lab

*By Maxine Bernstein
October 14, 2015*

Portland's City Council on Wednesday formally accepted a \$1.2 million federal grant to help send the Police Bureau's stockpile of untested sexual assault kits to a private lab for analysis.

The money also would go to make sure future kits are tested soon after they're collected.

The goal of the federal money is the "creation of a community response that ensures just resolution to these cases whenever possible," according to the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The money is awarded to help the bureau track and test the kits, and improve investigations, prosecutions and outreach to sexual assault victims.

Mayor Charlie Hales, who serves as police commissioner, said he appreciated the support of Oregon's congressional delegation, which provided a letter of support of the bureau's grant request.

Hales said he hopes the money will help the bureau "clear this backlog, follow good policy and make sure that women in this community who are victims of this crime are properly supported in every case, in every turn, going forward."

Police Chief Larry O'Dea issued an apology earlier this year after The Oregonian/OregonLive reported that Portland police had failed to follow through on its promises in 2002 to eliminate the stockpile once they discovered more than 1,000 untested kits in their evidence warehouse. They found the kits as detectives searched for clues in the December 2001 sexual assault and killing of 14-year-old Melissa Bittler.

Since then, the glut of untested kits more than doubled to 2,408. That number, reported to state police as of July 1, includes 328 kits from victims who want to remain anonymous. Portland police don't plan to test those kits.

The three-year federal grant will cover the testing of 1,931 untested kits collected by police between 1985 and December 2014.

Last year, the bureau adopted its first written guidelines that require most sexual assault kits to be sent to a lab for testing. The policy says sex crimes detectives should submit all kits that involve an unknown suspect to a lab. In the case of known suspects, the kits must go to the lab if the sexual assault involved any form of violence or if the suspect has a history of violence.

When they finally test the mountain of kits – estimated to take at least two years -- Portland police expect to get at least 500 matches connecting evidence in the kits to DNA profiles of criminals or crime scenes stored in the national criminal justice DNA database.

Local resident Charles Johnson, who testified before the council, said he was disturbed the city waited until receiving federal money to get the kits tested. He said that "tells victims of sexual assault we aren't going to test your evidence of sexual assault unless the feds tell us to."

The Justice Department initially announced a \$2 million grant for the bureau. But because the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office got a grant for the same purpose from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the federal grant for Portland was reduced.

Portland approves \$500,000 for regional psychiatric ER center

*By Maxine Bernstein
October 14, 2015*

The Portland City Council on Wednesday unanimously voted to award \$500,000 toward the creation of a regional psychiatric center.

The Unity Center for Behavioral Health is on schedule and set to open in either late November or early December 2016, said Legacy Health's chief administrative officer.

Legacy Health, Oregon Health & Science University Hospital, Kaiser and Adventist hospitals have signed a joint operating agreement.

Architectural design is underway to turn Legacy's Holladay Park building into a 101-bed mental health center, with a 24-hour psychiatric emergency department, inpatient beds and space for community mental health resources to connect with patients before their discharge.

The \$50 million project is getting money from Multnomah (\$3 million), Clackamas (\$250,000) and Washington (\$200,000) counties, the city of Portland and private donations.

The Robert D. and Marcia H. Randall Charitable Trust in August donated \$20 million to the project. Legacy Health provided the real estate, worth about \$10 million, and is leading a campaign to raise an outstanding \$10 million to meet the goal.

"This is a community-based project," said Dr. Mike Newcomb, Legacy Health's chief operating officer. "One of the things we're really trying to do is decriminalize people who have mental health problems."

Newcomb said the united work of four competitor private health care organizations, together with community support, makes the center a "nationally unique project."

The idea is to have ambulances, instead of police, transport people in mental health crisis to the psychiatric emergency room for care. Emergency medical personnel will be called out to do a quick assessment and determine whether they need to go to the Unity Center or to a regular medical facility, Newcomb said.

"The last place someone in mental health crisis should be is in the back of a police car," said Mayor Charlie Hales, who serves as police commissioner. "We're putting them there more gently now, but that's not good enough. ... I can't wait until this is how we're treating people in our community."

Before patients are discharged, they will be connected with a community-based mental health provider for follow-up appointments. They also will be paired with peers – people who have gone through mental health crises themselves and receive specialized training -- to help support their recoveries.

Of the 101 beds, 79 will be for adults and 22 for adolescents.

Portland currently has 90 mental health inpatient beds for adults and 16 for adolescents.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who said she began a career in the mental health field in Portland in 1986, said the center's plans make her feel "cautiously optimistic" for the first time. She did note, however, that the opening of the new center will mark a net decrease in adult mental health care beds available in Portland.

Legacy officials say they hope the initial care at a psychiatric emergency room will reduce the number of people who need to be admitted to inpatient beds. When the center opens, there will be a loss of 11 adult mental health inpatient beds, but a gain of six inpatient beds for adolescents in Portland.

Commissioner Nick Fish praised the project but said more needs to be done to provide transitional housing for patients once they're discharged.

"I think this is a significant step forward, but there's still a gap," Fish said.

Downtown Portland parking could hit \$2 an hour

*By Brad Schmidt
October 13, 2015*

Parking rates in downtown Portland could hit \$2 an hour next year under a proposal headed to the City Council for consideration in December.

A 40 cent jump represents an increase of 25 percent, which is in line with past hikes. City leaders haven't raised meter rates since 2009, when hourly charges rose from \$1.25 to \$1.60.

The increase was recommended by a city panel tasked with studying central city parking. A subcommittee of 12 members voted 10 to 2 in favor of the \$2 hourly rate.

The City Council is scheduled to review the proposal Dec. 2 at 2 p.m. If approved, the new rates would go into effect in 2016.

As envisioned, the \$2 rates would only apply to downtown-area parking meters. The downtown zone includes the area bound by Interstate 405, but it also includes the South Waterfront District and parts of Goose Hollow.

Officials hope to justify the increase because parking experts say there isn't enough on-street parking turnover.

Generally, if more than 85 percent of on-street parking stalls are full, prices are too low, according to a presentation the City Council received last week. The presentation stated that parking exceeds that 85 percent target "for several hours each day."

But a 2014 study found that the city's downtown parking stalls exceeded 85 percent just once during the daytime, when 90 percent of stalls were full at 1 p.m. weekdays.

The study also indicated that 87 percent of stalls were full at 7 p.m., the same time the city stops charging hourly rates for parking.

Staff for the Portland Bureau of Transportation expect that raising parking rates could create negative perceptions about shopping downtown.

But, according to their presentation, higher parking rates would create more turnover – making it easier to find parking – and thus "improve the parking experience."

Sandra McDonough, president of the Portland Business Alliance, said her group has been talking to city officials about a \$2 hourly rate but hasn't yet taken a formal position on the increase.

Messages left for the Portland Bureau of Transportation and Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees the bureau, weren't immediately returned Tuesday.

In May, Transportation Director Leah Treat said a rate-hike proposal would likely move forward by year's end.

The Portland Tribune

New plan emerges for future of aging Portland Building

By Jim Redden

October 15, 2015

If Fred Miller gets his way, all of the employees will be moved out of the Portland Building in 2017.

The interior of the city's primary office building will be gutted and rebuilt, much of the exterior will be removed and replaced, and it will reopen for work three years later.

The cost? A maximum \$175 million in 2015 dollars, financed mostly by bonds repaid by increased rents charged to the agencies that occupy the building. With inflation, the project will be capped at \$195 million in 2020 dollars.

Miller is the Chief Administrative Officer and director of the Office of Management and Finance for the City of Portland. He plans to present his proposal for the aging building to the City Council on Oct. 21. According to Miller, if the council doesn't approve the plan then, the cost will only increase as time passes and the building continues to deteriorate.

"The next time they look at it, the cost could be \$250 million," Miller says.

Mayor Charlie Hales, who is in charge of OMF, has reviewed the proposal and thinks it is sound, says his spokesperson, Sara Hottman.

It is unclear whether a majority of the council will support Miller's proposal, however. Commissioner Steve Novick has been the most vocal member in support of preparing the building for a large earthquake. But, even though he has been briefed about the proposal, Novick says he has questions about it. He declined to detail them to the Portland Tribune, however.

Miller knows the vote won't be easy. The city is facing a wide range of pressing financial demands, including a homelessness and rent crisis that caused the council to declare a "housing emergency" on Oct. 7, a campaign by the Portland Police Association to hire 700 more officers to fight crime, a \$2 billion street-paving shortfall, the opportunity to purchase and prepare the downtown U.S. Post Office site for development for \$115 million, a minimum \$35 million repair and renovation bill for the aging Veterans Memorial Coliseum, and unknown Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup and Columbia River levee repair costs.

In the face of these demands, spending up to \$195 million to improve the working conditions for approximately 1,300 city employees might seem a little insensitive.

And renovating the building will not satisfy those who prefer it be torn down. Since it opened in 1982 as the first postmodern building in an American city, the Portland Building has been widely criticized for its outlandish design and colors. But it also has been praised by preservationists, who respect architect Michael Graves' bold alternative to the uniformity of the boxy glass towers that have come to dominate urban skylines. The building's unique design helped get it added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

But Miller insists the council doesn't really have a choice. The 33-year-old building will not survive the large Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake predicted to hit the region in the future, even though it houses agencies and equipment deemed essential to the city's recovery. Persistent water leaks on numerous floors are undermining its structural integrity and could lead to mold infestations. Additionally, the interior was poorly designed and constructed, leading to employee and public complaints.

Miller also insists his plan is the best of all possible options.

Demolition, moving are expensive

When Miller came to the city several years ago after a lengthy administrative career at the State of Oregon and Portland General Electric, the city was considering spending \$95 million on

the Portland Building to attempt to stop the leaks again and bring it up to current earthquake standards.

Miller was not comfortable with the estimate and was not sure that was the best plan, considering the building's other shortcomings. So he appointed a high-powered advisory group that includes some of the biggest construction-related names in town: Tom Walsh, president of Tom Walsh & Co.; Bing Sheldon, FAIA, retired founder and chairman of SERA Architects; Roger Roper, Deputy State of Oregon Historic Preservation Officer; John Russell, founder of Russell Development; Bob Ball, principle at Astor Pacific LLC; and Ralph DiNola, CEO of New Buildings Institute.

Working with city staff, the advisory group considered a wide range of options. They included demolishing and replacing it, or constructing a new building in a different part of town. All of the options cost more than \$175 million, with the additional costs ranging from \$40 to \$51 million, in 2015 dollars. Demolition alone is estimated at \$25 million.

Miller also wants the council to increase the rents paid by the agencies that will occupy the renovated buildings. The potential increases would be substantial. Miller says they currently are paying approximately \$16 per square foot. The new rents could be around \$50 a square foot. The increase could be brought down to about \$30 a square foot, Miller says, if the council equalizes the rents paid by all city agencies in all city-owned buildings.

On Oct. 21, Miller will ask the council to approve three ordinances to move the project forward. Among other things, the ordinances will direct that no more than \$195 million in 2020 dollars be spent to complete the project by then. Approximately one-third of the money would be spent relocating the existing employees to unknown locations. While the project is underway. The location of their temporary quarters has not yet been determined.

"There are still a lot of details to be worked out, but something has to be done," Miller says.

Building and housing costs

The Portland Building hearing is scheduled as the council increases its focus on homeless and affordable housing issues. Scheduled and ongoing efforts include:

- The council will consider the use of surplus city funds to finance a program to prevent the eviction of low-income women at the annual fall budget adjustment hearing on Oct. 27.
- The council will consider a "linkage fee" on new developments that increase housing costs to help fund affordable housing projects at an Oct. 28 council hearing.
- The Mayor's Office and A Home for Everyone will identify city-owned properties that can be converted to homeless shelters. A Home for Everyone is a joint city-Multnomah County initiative intended to reduce homelessness. The former Sears Armory outside of Multnomah Village in Southwest Portland already is under consideration.
- The city will relocate the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp in Old Town to Oregon Department of Transportation property in inner Southeast Portland.
- The Portland Housing Bureau will sign agreements with developers to spend \$60 million in previously allocated urban renewal funds on affordable housing projects in various parts of the city.

- The council will identify the source for \$20 million in new homeless and housing assistance funds promised by Hales as part of a \$30 million agreement with Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury.

Demolition tax not ready to come out of oven just yet

By Steve Law

October 14, 2015

Mayor Charlie Hales put his proposed \$25,000 tax on home demolitions up for its first public hearing Wednesday, and quickly acknowledged it's not ready yet to be enacted.

"My hope is that this will cut the rate of demolition of serviceable housing in half and raise \$2 million a year for affordable housing," Hales said at the outset of a hearing lasting more than two hours.

But after hearing flak that his plan was filled with loopholes and unwise exemptions, Hales stressed that it's still in the formative stages and he's open to ideas on how to reshape it.

Jon Chandler, leader of the Oregon Home Builders Association, sent word that the demolition tax violates a state ban on real estate excise taxes.

Anti-demolition activists in the group United Neighborhoods for Reforms said it won't accomplish what it's supposed to.

A leader of a new affordable housing coalition said it may lead to a loss of affordable housing.

"It's just a starting point," Hales said at one point, urging those in attendance to help him reshape the plan. "There's going to be more staff work that's needed to refine the proposal."

One of the biggest complaints is an exemption if a developer tears down a house and puts up two in its place, because that helps meet the city's goals for increased density. But Jillian Detweiler, the mayor's policy director, noted that only 36 percent of the demolitions taking place last year resulted in one home replacing another.

That exemption "will encourage demolitions and lot divisions," said Barbara Strunk of United Neighborhoods for Reforms, which formed to halt the epidemic of demolitions across Portland's rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

The home that's being replaced might be an affordable home, replaced by two more expensive homes, said Jes Larson, leader of the Welcome Home coalition of affordable housing advocates.

Strunk said the tax should be set higher, at \$35,000, to have a real effect.

Others are concerned the tax will hurt the value of the "nest egg" of more modest homeowners hoping to sell their house before retiring elsewhere.

Conversely, a \$25,000 tax on a demolition project might not accomplish much when high-end homes are built as replacements.

"When we're talking about \$1 million homes resulting, that almost certainly is not going to deter them," said Robert McCullough, president of the Southeast Uplift neighborhood coalition.

The Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland opposes any kind of tax on demolitions, testified Paul Grove, the group's lobbyist. The tax will make housing more expensive, he said, and make it harder, for example, to replace an old drafty home with one that's energy-efficient.

The City Attorney's Office has concluded the demolition tax won't run afoul of the state ban on real estate excise taxes, said Thomas Lannom, director of the city Revenue Division. His staff have only been able to find two communities north of Chicago that have demolition taxes, both set at \$10,000. Both have held up to legal challenges so far, he said.

"This is, if we do it, an innovation," Hales said. "We have to try a lot of things to address the housing crisis in our community."

The mayor promised to take the feedback under advisement and bring a revised ordinance back to the City Council at some undetermined future date.

To read the proposed ordinance:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=50265&a=548229>

City Council approves limited renter protections

By Jim Redden

October 14, 2015

Saying the changes don't go far enough, the City Council unanimously increased the notifications landlords must give tenants for non-cause evictions and rent increases of more than 5 percent a year.

The council increased the notification requirements over those in the state Landlord-Tenant Law. The council increased the requirement for non-cause evictions from 30 to 90 days, and the notification on rent increased over 5 percent from between 30 and 60 days to 90 days.

"Portland renters need help. They are facing unprecedented rent increases and low vacancies," said Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who is in charge of the Portland Housing Bureau and introduced the ordinance with the extensions.

Saltzman said state law prohibits the council from doing more to limit no-fault evictions and rent increases, but some groups representing landlords believe the council does not even have this much authority and may challenge the ordinance in court.

Mayor Charlie Hales said the council has to act to help Portlanders at the mercy of housing cost increases being caused by more and more people moving to town, in part to take advantage of the recovering economy.

"Planners says 200,000 more people are going to be living here in 20 years. The questions is, what will we be then, San Francisco or Portland," said Hales, referring to the California city with the highest housing costs on the West Coast.

Hales also said the Oregon legislature might increase state protections or give cities more authority on rental issues during the 2016 session that starts in February of next year.

Bikes, peds and cars get a new green light in North Portland

By Jennifer Anderson

October 14, 2015

One of Portland's busiest intersections got a new traffic signal Wednesday morning.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation turned on the signal at North Vancouver Avenue and Cook Street, as business owners and community members from the Boise and Eliot neighborhoods gathered to celebrate.

The North Williams/Vancouver corridor is the city's busiest bike route, and the intersection at Williams and Cook has been on the city's Top 10 list for right-angle crashes.

PBOT celebrated the event as part of the North Vancouver Avenue and Cook Street Local Improvement District, an effort between PBOT and local property owners who pooled their resources to share the cost of the transportation infrastructure improvements.

PBOT managed the design and construction of the project.

"Credit goes to the members of the Boise and Eliot neighborhoods and the local business community — many of whom have been advocating for this traffic signal for a very long time," said Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Leah Treat. "It is because of their community spirit and persistence that we have this signal here today."

The North Vancouver and Cook Street LID was approved by City Council in May 2014 and included six property owners: The American Red Cross, Legacy Health, Kaiser Group, Karuna Properties, Cook Street Apartments LLC and New Seasons.

It was the first LID in the city to focus primarily on traffic signals and utility undergrounding.

It raised \$1,055,000 for improvements, including:

- Realignment of eastbound lanes — North Cook Street from the Interstate 405 off-ramp to North Vancouver Avenue
- New mast arm traffic signal — North Vancouver Avenue and Cook Street intersection
- New mast arm traffic signal to replace existing span wire signal — North Vancouver Avenue and Fremont Street intersection
- New mast arm traffic signal to replace existing span wire signal — North Williams Avenue and Fremont Street intersection
- New left turn signal from North Fremont Street westbound to North Vancouver Avenue southbound.

Willamette Week

Where Should We Move Portlandia?

The Statue of Liberty's younger, shorter sister celebrates 30 years of being somewhat visible on the Portland Building.

By John Locanthi
October 10, 2015

Portlandia, the trident-wielding, Hellenic statue celebrating the rich history and tradition Portland does not have, turned 30 this week. Mayor Charlie Hales, former mayor Bud Clark and others will attend as Portland celebrates its copper goddess, the nation's second-tallest statue of her kind after the Statue of Liberty. But she may not make it another thirty more on her perch on the Portland Building, and that would be a good thing.

The future of the Portland Building is very much in doubt. The late Michael Graves' art deco design—consistently listed as one of the nation's ugliest buildings—is in dire need of many improvements despite being a young 32 years old. The cost of renovating this building was estimated at \$95 million last summer. Per the Oregonian earlier this summer, that estimate is now up to \$192 million as city planners realized that not only does it need better lighting, better windows and a better water system, but it also won't survive an earthquake. Some say repair it, others say tear it down and replace it with a building that is both aesthetically pleasing and functional. (The Portland Building being on the National Register of Historic Places makes the latter option more complicated.) All of this raises an interesting question: What's to be done with the statue of Portlandia?

Portlandia is unfortunately tied to this building through the percent for public art program. Most previous articles and news coverage have focused on the issue of her copyright and the litigious Washington, D.C., based sculptor who owns it—including a fantastic cover story in Willamette Week's fall arts guide last year—but that's only part of the problem. Her location, to put it mildly, stinks.

Crouched upon her perch along 5th Avenue-facing side of the Portland building, she gazes out to across the street and into a tall, dull banking building. You can walk right under her in the spring and summer without even seeing her through the dense foliage. The best vantage point is by going to the second floor of that building across the street.

Where the White Stag sign has become Portland's equivalent of Pike Place for establishing shots, Portlandia is relatively unknown. It's hard to get an aerial view of statue stuck near the bottom of tall buildings, and we know street view isn't of much help either. (The networks would probably have a cease and desist letter coming their way even if they pulled it off.)

There was a strong effort in 1998 by then-mayor Vera Katz to move Portlandia moved to the waterfront. From Tom McCall Waterfront Park, she'd be far more visible to city-dwellers. The nearby water would provide better feng shui than being a rando with a trident in the middle of Portland's concrete jungle. The move would've made a lot of sense. This effort ultimately failed due to an inability to muster enough votes on the city council.

Portlandia was supposed to become an icon. The statue is based on the Lady of Commerce in the Portland city seal. Shouldn't she be in a place where Portlanders can see her?

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor

Why Can't the City Figure Out How to Regulate Pot? Because of Alcohol.

*By Dirk VanderHart
October 14, 2015*

THE CITY'S fumbling attempts to regulate the pot industry have an unofficial motto of sorts: "It's still wrong."

That simple declaration has been uttered again and again in the last month—first in a set of three hearings over proposed licenses on cannabis businesses, then in private meetings between city staff and cannabis industry representatives.

Most recently, it was voiced by pot industry attorney Amy Margolis, who on Tuesday brought clients around Portland City Hall to impress upon city commissioners—again—that regulations the city is considering could hamper Portland's cannabis businesses.

"I am so tired of talking to the city," Margolis said. "Everybody is trying to act from best intentions, but they're about to create a pretty huge catastrophe."

This gets confusing, so let's back up.

Portland already has pot regulations. They were passed in rushed fashion on September 30, even as commissioners acknowledged they'd have to be tweaked.

The laws that sit on the books today are hard to fathom, tacked with provisions that require baroque calculations to decide who's allowed to sell you pot and who can't. They might become more confusing still under changes city council is scheduled to consider October 14, but they won't be any more palatable to the city's pot retailers—the very people the changes are aimed at.

That's largely because of a belief among city staff that marijuana's going to bring the same problems that alcohol does. No conversation about pot licensing goes far without some city official impugning the Oregon Liquor Control Commission for allowing problematic liquor establishments to festoon Portland.

"You guys are in some ways tarred by association," Deputy City Attorney Ben Walters told pot industry representatives at a recent meeting to hash out licensing rules. (Never mind that bars and pot dispensaries have little in common.)

The "tarring" Walters spoke of has led the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) to push rules that vastly limit the number of weed stores by ensuring that most can't be within 1,000 feet of one another.

It's this provision that's causing much of the trouble. It raises questions about whether existing dispensaries might get pushed out or be limited in their ability to sell recreational pot if other businesses encroach on their turf. And it's still in force under the "fixes" council will consider October 14.

At least one city commissioner thinks the city needs to rethink its strategy altogether. Since late last month, Commissioner Dan Saltzman has argued for drastically limiting the city's regulations on pot dispensaries.

The city's current laws seem "overly regulatory and overly duplicative," Saltzman said September 30. "We should let the market establish itself and it will shake itself out."

Margolis and her crew made a similar case on Tuesday in meetings with city staff. They say the city should pull back, rethink its strategy, and simplify its planned regulations.

Those pleas weren't enough to avert what will almost certainly be another contentious hearing. Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees ONI, planned to take up the proposed changes despite industry concerns, her staff said, "still wrong" or not.

New Affordable Housing is Coming to the Pearl District

By Shelby R. King

October 14, 2015

The Portland Housing Bureau announced Wednesday it's selected a local nonprofit developer to build an affordable housing development on city-owned property in the Pearl District, according to a news release.

Innovative Housing Inc. will build at least 30 family-size units—which means two or more bedrooms—to be priced as affordable to households earning 30 percent or less than the area's median family income (MFI), which is currently \$24,250 for a family of four. The development will also include one-bedroom units priced for tenants earning 60 percent or less than MFI, or up to \$35,280 for a two-person household.

The finished product will also have a community room, indoor and outdoor play areas, on-site laundry, and resident support services, according to the news release. The city has decided to prioritize creating family-size units after a June study found there's been a 24 percent increase in Multnomah County's homeless families with children since 2013. Families with kids also make up a "disproportionate" percentage of the estimated 12,000 people who live in temporary housing or with roommates.

"When families are displaced by a rent increase or a medical crisis, it's children who suffer," Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury wrote in the news release. "This project will give kids safe, stable homes where they can thrive."

The city acquired the property—located at Northwest 14th and Ralieggh—in the spring from Hoyt Street Properties at a discount. PHB issued a request for proposals in May and construction will begin in 2017.

Innovative Housing Inc. has worked on several other area affordable housing developments, including The Magnolia and Broadway Vantage Apartments.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Mental health clinic project may get help from city

By Garrett Andrews

October 13, 2015

The Portland City Council this week will consider whether to appropriate money – no more than \$500,000 – to help build a walk-in mental health clinic in Northeast Portland.

Four entities are partnering to build the \$50 million Unity Center for Behavioral Health on Legacy Emanuel's Holladay Park campus at the site of a former Oregon State Hospital facility. Legacy Emanuel, Oregon Health & Science University, Adventist Health and Kaiser Permanente have entered into a joint operating agreement for construction.

The donation of real estate by Legacy will account for \$10 million of the project cost. The \$40 million renovation will create space for beds to accommodate 79 adults and 22 adolescents. The building will also include a psychiatric emergency unit.

Currently, no Portland facility exists specifically for people experiencing psychiatric emergencies, Legacy spokeswoman Amber Shoebridge said.

Other public entities paying into the project include Multnomah County (\$3 million), Clackamas County (\$250,000) and Washington County (\$200,000). Earlier this year, the Randall Charitable Trust announced a \$20 million contribution to the project.

"This project is going to be really interesting," Shoebridge said. "The reason I think you're seeing several different municipalities paying in, and four different systems trying to find a solution is that this problem is really too big for any one entity to address. But the hope is that by coming together, we can do more than we could alone."

GoLocalPDX

Parking Rates in Downtown Portland May Rise to \$2 an Hour

By GoLocalPDX News Team

October 15, 2015

Parking in Portland may become more expensive in the near future. A proposal that calls for parking rates to rise as high as \$2 an hour next year is scheduled to be voted on by the Portland City Council in December.

The increase was recommended by a panel charged with studying parking in downtown and central Portland. 12 members of the panel voted on the \$2 per hour rate, with 10 members voting in favor of the change.

In the current proposal, the \$2 per hour rate would only affect parking meters in downtown and central city.

City officials justified the increase by citing parking experts, who say there is not enough turnover in on street parking.

According to a presentation to the City Council last week, if more than 85 percent of on-street parking stalls are full, prices are too low. A 2014 study found that parking spaces rose above 85 percent just once during the working hours, at 1 PM on weekdays, when 90 percent of stalls were filled. Stalls were 87 percent full at 7 p.m., when the city stops charging hourly rates for parking.

According to the presentation, higher parking rates would create more turnover, making it easier to find parking.

The City Council is expected to review and vote on the proposal on December 2. Parking fees have not been changed since 2009, when hourly rates rose from \$1.25 to \$1.60 an hour.