

The Oregonian

All 5 members of Portland City Council may reside west of Willamette

Brad Schmidt

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Portland's crop of City Council members may share an unlikely bond in January: All five could end up living west of the Willamette River.

In a city 133 square miles in size, that surprising factoid is a distinct possibility now that Commissioner Nick Fish, a former eastsider, has downsized and moved with his wife and son into a Goose Hollow apartment.

That type of westside concentration would appear to be a first in the 103 years since voters approved Portland's commission form of government, which doesn't require district representation.

"I think it's about your values and about the work you do – not about where you live," Fish said.

Combined with Mayor-elect Ted Wheeler (Southwest Hills), Commissioner Dan Saltzman (Hillsdale) and Commissioner Amanda Fritz (West Portland Park), Fish's move means four of five members next year will live in Southwest Portland.

And Commissioner Steve Novick, who is seeking re-election, also lives in Southwest Portland's Multnomah neighborhood. Novick holds a commanding position heading into the November general election, having secured a 28 percentage-point lead in the primary over challenger Chloe Eudaly, who lives in Northeast Portland's Woodlawn neighborhood.

Fish, for one, isn't concerned about the westside concentration.

"I lived on the eastside for 20 years, and I'm an eastside person," said Fish, who until this month lived in a home just beyond Northeast Portland's Grant Park neighborhood. "I'm not going to stop advocating for the eastside just because I live in Goose Hollow."

Two years ago, The Oregonian/OregonLive took an exhaustive look at the historic ramifications of citywide elections and the concentration of political power it allows. The news organization tracked the home address of each member of the City Council at the time they were elected – but not every address they subsequently moved to.

A review of that data suggests the City Council has always had at least one person living east of the Willamette.

Among America's 50 most populous cities, only Portland and Columbus, Ohio, elect politicians exclusively through at-large elections. Columbus voters in August will decide whether to scrap at-large elections in favor of some district representation.

Efforts to change Portland's government structure have been shot down by voters eight times. This month, a ninth attempt failed to qualify for the November ballot.

Proponents of Portland's at-large voting system say it's appropriate given the city's unique form of government, which assigns both legislative and administrative responsibilities to the mayor and commissioners. They also say citywide elections encourage elected officials to consider geographic equity and accountability rather than focusing on parochial issues.

Opponents, however, say the system has historically left poor areas — such as east Portland — without representation or attention to local needs.

Either way, each member of next year's City Council could end up sharing more than simply a Southwest Portland mailing address.

Not only would all five members be white, but, should Novick win, each will begin the new year between the ages of 53 and 63.

New site preparing to take in displaced Springwater campers

By Tony Hernandez

July 28, 2016

Pastor Mike Davis calls it Green Acres. Portland officials call it the Kalbrenner site.

Whatever the name, the 4-acre public land next to the Beggar's Tick Wildlife Refuge in outer Southeast Portland could soon fit up to 100 homeless people.

Portland leaders and homeless advocates have worked quietly for several months to prepare the land as a temporary settlement for a rising tide of itinerant campers who took advantage of Mayor Charlie Hales' suspension of the city's public camping ban earlier this year.

But now the spot has become a safety valve as Hales announced a sweep of an estimated 500 campers from the Springwater Corridor to address safety concerns from neighbors along the trail and environmental damage caused by a boom in encampments.

The city disclosed plans this week to use the site east of 104th Avenue on Reedway Street for an expected influx from the Springwater cleanup when Hales decided to delay the sweep by a month to Sept. 1.

The site — an open expanse with clusters of bushes and mounds of dirt about a ½ mile north of the Springwater trail — is home to just a handful of campers now and has hazardous chemical contamination that must be removed before the onslaught.

In the next few weeks, the new campsite will become equipped with a kitchen, portable bathrooms, basic sanitation service and plenty of trash containers. Campers will sign agreements to abide by a code of conduct as they commit to look for transitional housing, said Davis, of Knowing Me Ministries.

Davis has helped transform the site into an organized community by training leaders, establishing a leadership council that delegates tasks such as cleanup, security and cooking. Each camper agrees to work 10 hours a week to better the campsite while they stay on the

grounds, he said. At most, 12 campers have stayed at the site, and he wonders about supervising 100.

"It feels like it will be too many people in one place," Davis said, "but I also know that if I'm able to work with the city and county on this, we know how to manage that many people."

Deidra Schmeier used to live off the Springwater Corridor but moved to Green Acres two months ago with her daughter and two grandchildren, she said. She loves the idea of an organized camp.

"I can't wait to see what it looks like," Schmeier said. "When we first got here, there was wall-to-wall trash. It was a dumpsite. It was gross. We're still cleaning."

The campers are moving away temporarily while crews ready the land and will return by September.

"I lived next to trashy people on the trail," Schmeier said. "There's no reason why you can't take your trash when you leave. If you can't take it (trash) out, don't bring it in."

The city must remove piles of contaminated dirt. City records show officials have known about the contamination, some from illegal dumping, since at least 2000 and most recently studied the soil in 2014, said Linc Mann, a spokesman for the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, which owns the four acres.

Some of the piles may have elevated levels of lead, but they don't exceed an amount that risks human health, said Sara Hottman, Hales' spokeswoman.

"The removal of contaminated soil will occur next week and is projected to take four days, ending Aug. 5," she said. The cleanup should cost \$55,500 as crews estimate they will haul away 500 cubic yards of material, she said. The contamination was first reported by the Portland Mercury last month.

"The plan is to operate this (site) under the mayor's Sanctioned Camping pilot," she said. "The city will provide basic infrastructure — running water and electricity — and the City-County Joint Office of Homeless Services will provide social services."

City officials haven't said their exact plans will be for the estimated 400 others living on the trail, but Hales has repeatedly said outreach workers are trying to find shelter spaces or other spots for homeless people to land.

Angel Sanchez has owned Jose's Autobody Shop with his son on property next to the campsite for eight years. He's frequently dealt with homeless people who have stolen items from his cars, but he hasn't had serious issues with the group now camping on the site, he said.

Some have asked for access to the shop's water hose or air for their bike tires and he has helped, he said. But he didn't expect news of 100 campers coming and he can't sustain that generosity, he said.

It feels like "an ice-cold pail (has been) dumped on my back," Sanchez said. No one from the city has alerted him of the plans for more campers, he said.

"What else can we do? The city is the city," he said. "They're the ones who give the orders."

Victoria Todd lives on Reedway Street with her four children and grandchildren a few houses away from the campsite's entrance. She moved into her new home after seven months of homelessness, she said.

She supports the campsite and isn't concerned about trash, crime, drug use or other stereotypes associated with homeless people.

"Of course there's some bad apples," she said, "but no matter where you go, you're going to find some bad apples. If it's organized, I think it's fine. I haven't seen any bad activity."

The Portland Business Journal

City picks contractor for \$140M worth of work on the Portland Building

By Jon Bell

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Thirty-four years into its lifespan, the love-it-or-hate-it Portland Building is in need of some serious reconstruction work to address moisture, seismic, electrical and other issues.

The Portland City Council voted last year to approve a reconstruction project not to exceed \$195 million and to be completed by 2020. And yesterday, commissioners awarded a \$140 million contract for the work to construction firm Howard S. Wright and the design firm DLR Group.

According to the Oregonian, the reconstruction project is set to be funded by revenue bonds, which the council will vote on next week. Additional funding above the \$140 million could be used to temporarily relocate some of the 1,300 employees who work in the building during construction.

Howard S. Wright's recent projects in Portland include the Pearl West office building, the under-construction Broadway Tower and the Ninth & Northrup office building.