

Willamette Week

Portland's Laurelhurst Neighborhood Fights to Keep the Housing Crisis Out

By Rachel Monahan

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On the leafy streets of the Laurelhurst neighborhood, the natives are very, very restless.

At the end of last month, residents of Laurelhurst turned out in record numbers to vote in their neighborhood association election for one reason: to get protection from developers.

The winning candidates pledged to bypass City Hall and ask the National Park Service to declare much of the 425-acre eastside neighborhood a historic site.

Laurelhurst would be the third Portland neighborhood to request such a designation within a year. (Eastmoreland and Peacock Lane have already filed requests, which have not yet been granted.)

Getting a historic designation means that demolition permits would be much more difficult to obtain for old houses, and the neighborhood would probably get a say in designs for new houses. Conversations with a number of residents make clear they have no interest in teardowns or gaudy McMansions or new apartment buildings for renters.

"Laurelhurst is unique. Every house is unique," says John Liu, who bought his 1911 Portland foursquare in 2006. "If we can't stop redevelopment, this piece of Portland history will basically go away."

Laurelhurst is one of many central eastside Portland neighborhoods where housing values have soared since the recession, and where developers are snatching up scarce vacant lots and a few modest homes they can demolish and replace. The average home price here is now \$750,000—and one house sold this month for \$1.6 million.

By seeking to make the neighborhood a historic district, Laurelhurst residents are taking aim at what they see as the neighborhood's greatest enemy: a real estate developer with a backhoe, bent on tearing down 100-year-old houses to replace them with apartments, a duplex or a huge new house.

"The whole street—it will look like Beaverton by the time they're done," says John Deodato, a longtime Laurelhurst homeowner who says he gets 20 letters a month from developers seeking to buy his home. "The city won't do anything about it unless we do."

But Laurelhurst's effort may be for naught: The state Legislature is currently considering a bill that would deny neighborhoods the right to use historic designations to block housing developments.

Laurelhurst is a progressive Portland neighborhood, where Democrats outnumber Republicans 14 to 1, Bernie Sanders won 46 percent of the vote last spring, and where, in theory, residents share values that are part of the Oregon liberal DNA: smart land-use planning and dense neighborhoods.

Yet Laurelhurst's biggest opponents are those who share the same politics but think that neighbors are being selfish.

"We are facing a housing shortage with dire consequences," Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland) said last month, "and frankly I am disappointed that this bill has run into some of the same old NIMBYism that helped create this crisis."

Critics charge that by trying to save Laurelhurst from the wrecking ball, its residents are in fact erecting a wall to keep out newcomers, renters and people of modest means—making Laurelhurst an oasis of money in the midst of a housing shortage.

Former Metro Councilor Robert Liberty, who once headed 1000 Friends of Oregon, perhaps the state's leading land-use advocate, says Laurelhurst's agenda is contrary to that of progressive politics.

"The consequence [of seeking a historic designation] is pretty clear: It isolates those neighborhoods from shared responsibilities to be a more welcoming community and to accommodate the housing that's needed," Liberty says.

Whoever wins the fight for Laurelhurst, this much is clear: Your neighborhood may soon be next.

The Laurelhurst neighborhood looks as if it's in the middle of an election year. Nearly every block is littered with yard signs. Some read "Love Wins"—an anti-Trump, pro-tolerance slogan—or "Black Lives Matter." But the most common sign says, "Laurelhurst: Historic Character, Progressive Vision." These are historic designation campaign signs.

Last month, Scott Pratt won the presidency of the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association while warning of an impending dystopia.

"The Laurelhurst of the future," he said in a campaign video, "will feature towering multifamily units on every block, fewer small, more affordable historic homes, fewer mature trees, and increased congestion on streets and in schools."

Pratt, 61, is trim man with a mop of white hair, who most days still bikes to work downtown, where he has a small private law practice. For years, he volunteered as chairman of the board of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters.

He fidgets as he talks sitting on the patio of the modest, periwinkle blue home that his wife bought in 1988 for \$75,000.

Pratt argues historic preservation isn't really at odds with addressing Portland's housing costs. In his view, stopping demolitions keeps small homes available for less wealthy buyers. Pratt says he could support more density if it didn't change the neighborhood's look.

"I'm not saying we can't absorb some more density," he says, "but every neighborhood should not be equally dense. You don't get diversity if you make everything look alike."

Pratt warns that if Laurelhurst isn't allowed to decide what gets developed within its boundaries, the neighborhood will indeed become cheaper eventually—because it will become hideous.

"Nobody will want to live here," he says. "It could lead to a place where people who own the [houses] want to move out and turn them into rentals. They'll be more affordable. They'll have more problems at the same time."

The problem that Laurelhurst residents say they face is a relatively new one. The neighborhood hasn't changed much in a century.

Since 1909, when developers bought more than 300 acres of an old dairy farm for \$2 million and divided them into lots, Laurelhurst has been a relatively wealthy eastside neighborhood—one of the few that was dedicated almost exclusively to single-family houses, and which has never allowed even modest "garden apartment" complexes.

But last June, the city Planning Bureau suggested changing the zoning code for Laurelhurst (and most of the inner eastside and parts of the westside) to promote more density through a "residential infill plan," which would allow duplexes on city lots now zoned for single-family homes. (Single-family lots account for more than 70 percent of the city's residential land.)

On Dec. 13, the City Council voted to endorse RIP, as it is called, and the Planning Commission is now writing the code and drawing a map for where it would apply. A vote for approval is expected next year.

City planners say they expect to see RIP lead to the construction of 4,500 new housing units citywide by allowing duplexes and triplexes—though few in Laurelhurst.

In that neighborhood, residents fear RIP would cause demolition numbers to rise.

Demolitions are reviled in Portland for many reasons: The noise is irritating, the environmental hazards such as lead and asbestos are alarming, and the prospect of a McMansion or two ugly modern duplexes next door is infuriating.

And residents view historic designation as a way to block them.

"We have an ace card to play that almost no other neighborhoods have," says Mike Parrott, a Laurelhurst resident, in the historic district's promotional materials. "It will add one more barrier against my street becoming filled with duplexes and my corner lots becoming triplexes."

Neighborhood association elections are usually sleepy affairs. This year's election in Laurelhurst on May 30 was anything but.

The association, which typically organizes neighborhood picnics and garage sales, and tends to the historic stone gates of Laurelhurst, has a dozen board members who come up for election every year. Almost without exception, incumbents have no opponents. This year, the slate of candidates running on a historic district platform ran against a nearly full slate of opponents, and it got ugly.

An ally of the pro-historic group bought up website domain names—KeepLaurelhurstFree.com and LaurelhurstForward.com—that the anti-historic group might want and used them to direct visitors to the pro-historic site, HistoricLaurelhurst.com. The other side threatened to sue.

The anti-historic district slate also accused opponents of conducting opposition research on foes—and publishing it on another website. It listed five people's names and identified their alleged professional connections to development, real estate and contracting.

"When people care a lot, there will be missteps," says Liu. "It really energized people."

More than 800 people voted in the election—a record for the neighborhood, and more than 10 times the number of voters in the previous election. The vote went overwhelmingly for the historic district candidates. Pratt, the pro-historic district candidate for president, won just under 80 percent of the vote.

The new board members say they will seek historic status, first with the state and then with the National Park Service. The process is likely to be successful—the agencies in charge rarely turn down neighborhoods that can make it through the laborious process to show their area contains buildings that are architecturally interesting or are early examples of house styles.

The designation will make it more difficult—perhaps impossible—to demolish historic homes. It is also likely to require design review for new houses built in the neighborhood, which adds to the cost. Both are all but certain to discourage outside developers.

Neighborhood associations have long played a powerful role in Portland politics. But the use of historic district status to get around the citywide planning process is a new approach.

"In the early '60s, the problem was, how do you keep the inner city vibrant?" says Chris Smith, who served on the Northwest District Association before joining the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission. "You get to today and some of the neighborhoods want to take what they've built and cast it in amber."

The most formidable opposition to their effort comes from Salem.

One of the more interesting developments in the battle over Laurelhurst is the strange bedfellows it has created.

Jon Chandler and Mary Kyle McCurdy, for example.

Chandler is a profane Santa Claus lookalike with a sharp sense of humor and a folksy style. Oregon born and bred, Chandler, 60, drives an Audi and is executive director of the Oregon Home Builders Association.

In other words, he's the point man in Oregon's Capitol looking out for the interests of developers.

McCurdy, also 60, is Chandler's foil in most political fights. The slight, intense policy nerd is deputy director of 1000 Friends of Oregon, the storied nonprofit founded after Oregon Gov. Tom McCall shepherded passage of the 1973 land-use laws that require cities to build densely rather than sprawl into surrounding forest and farmland.

McCurdy and Chandler have battled for decades over land-use issues.

But today, Portland's housing crisis has made allies of the two. Both are supporting House Bill 2007, which would strip neighborhoods of the power to veto demolitions, and force them to accept as much density as city zoning allows.

"The reasons we are involved with this bill has nothing to do with whether the home builders are involved with it," says McCurdy. "The bill increases housing opportunities—diverse housing opportunities and affordable housing opportunities—all of those inside our towns and cities, which is part of the land-use deal that we as Oregonians have had in place for 40 years."

McCurdy believes what's happening in Laurelhurst is a "misuse of historic district designation to prevent change."

Critics of the bill call 1000 Friends' and the home builders' support an unholy alliance.

"Gov. McCall would be spinning in his grave to see his beloved 1000 Friends of Oregon organization working side-by-side with the Home Builders Association, buying into the alt-right, fake-news theory of demolition as the cure for affordability," wrote Tracy Prince, vice president of the Goose Hollow Foothills League, in a May 17 letter to legislators.

But the pair see the merit of their alliance as obvious.

Chandler says his fight is to get Oregonians to recognize the consequences of their land-use policies, and the sentiment in Laurelhurst is not uncommon. Chandler calls it the "we thought you meant density someplace else" argument.

"People are squawking about the implications of their policy choice," he says. "[Gov. John] Kitzhaber said there's two things Oregonians hate: density and sprawl."

Kotek, who sponsored HB 2007 with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, says the outcry from neighborhoods is disingenuous.

"I've heard concerns about preserving neighborhood character," she said during a recent committee hearing. "But underlying some of these arguments is a desire to make sure that certain neighborhoods—often higher-income neighborhoods—are treated differently than others. Certain neighborhoods, some argue, should be off-limits even though we're facing a housing crisis. That is not acceptable."

The bill's prospects aren't good. Salem insiders say HB 2007 is waiting in line behind other housing legislation, which is in turn bogged down in a session in which Democrats are having trouble passing their agenda. (But the mere threat of the bill has already had an effect: Historic

preservationists around the state have asked for a change in state regulations that would more easily allow homes to be divided into up to four apartments.)

If the bill doesn't pass, Portland City Hall would be faced with a new threat: neighborhood associations with the power to override city policy.

Mayor Charlie Hales spent four years in City Hall waffling whether to make reluctant neighborhoods swallow more housing.

He changed his mind on apartments without parking, and failed to pass a half-baked tax on home demolitions.

But for all his casting about for solutions to the housing crisis, Hales left the city with a mandate for density.

Before leaving office in January, he rushed the RIP concept to the City Council—the proposal that would double the number of homes that can be built on single-family lots in much of the city.

Making sure the plan is carried out? That's up to the new mayor, Ted Wheeler.

Wheeler ran for office on a platform of creating more housing, more easily, across the city. Fights like the one in Laurelhurst will test his commitment to that campaign pledge.

In an interview last week, Wheeler told WW he continues to support increasing density, including in the neighborhoods—Laurelhurst, Eastmoreland and Multnomah Village—most likely to want to fight it off.

"We made a decision a long time ago to protect land outside the urban growth boundary," Wheeler says. "The reality is, if we don't consider those options, our city will increasingly become more unaffordable than it is today."

But Wheeler has chosen to stay quiet on House Bill 2007, citing city protocols that require unanimous support by the City Council for legislation in Salem.

He declined to make an exception for this, and wants to keep the city, not the state, in charge of density and demolition rules.

If the Legislature doesn't pass Kotek's bill, Wheeler and his colleagues will have to grapple with neighborhood associations wielding new power and a grudge against City Hall.

Yet the mayor says he still views the threat of historic districts as "hypothetical." His colleagues on the City Council are no more eager to head into battle with neighborhood associations.

"There is no need to confront neighborhoods on this, at least not yet," says Commissioner Nick Fish. "This issue should be framed and debated before the city takes a position on a change in state law. The bill in Salem came out of left field."

Both City Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Chloe Eudaly say historic districts and density can co-exist.

"Many Portlanders are experiencing shock at the rate of change going on in our city, and historic preservation is one of many legitimate concerns," says Eudaly. "I don't believe the goals of historic preservation, and increasing density and affordability are necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, our residential infill policy provides existing homeowners with low-impact opportunities to create more housing through internal divisions, accessory dwelling units, and adaptive reuse."

On a drizzly morning this month, a new resident of the Laurelhurst neighborhood was making pancakes.

Greg Black, 59, stood over a camp stove along the sidewalk on Southeast Oak Street. Black works as a cook at a New Seasons Market—and lives out of his pickup truck.

He makes a decent wage, \$12 an hour, but hasn't been able to afford his own apartment for five years. "I would not be living here," he says, "if I could find an affordable place."

There's little hope of Laurelhurst becoming that place. A Craigslist ad posted last week shows a restored attic in this neighborhood renting for \$1,000 a month.

Yet every neighborhood that adds new apartments is helping to ease the housing shortage, even in other places.

So Laurelhurst residents are making a decision about housing for the working poor. They're saying that other values, like the beauty of a century-old home or a tall tree, shouldn't be sacrificed to ease the housing shortage.

Pratt, the neighborhood association president, knows plenty about homelessness. A couple years ago, he served on the board of social services agency JOIN, which coordinates shelter beds.

Pratt acknowledges Portland needs to build more housing. But not too much of it in Laurelhurst.

"Everybody says the solution to homelessness is housing," he says. "I don't think the solution is that every neighborhood looks the same, and every neighborhood has everything, and your neighborhood [has] no uniqueness anymore."

The Portland Mercury

"Burn the Town Down"

By Santi Elijah Holley

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Tensions had been building for weeks.

Portland Police, emboldened by the newly established Intelligence Division, had become a regular presence in North/Northeast's Albina neighborhood, monitoring civil rights activity and "agitators." Police relations with Portland's African American community had never been positive, but in the summer of 1967, two years after the devastating Watts Riots, distrust between the police and the Black community ratcheted to new heights. In the opinion of many local residents, in particular young Blacks, Albina had come to resemble a police state.

"Where else but in Albina do cops hang around the streets and parks all day like plantation overseers?" commented one young man to an Oregonian reporter. "Just their presence antagonizes us. We feel like we're being watched all the time."

In North Portland, as in the rest of the country, tensions between police and the Black community were at an all-time high, and the city was primed to explode.

The summer of 1967 was racked by nationwide uprisings. The "long hot summer" saw 159 racially motivated riots across the United States, beginning in June with violent events in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Tampa, followed in July with more outbreaks in Birmingham, Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, and elsewhere. The largest and most extensive riots occurred in Newark, New Jersey (26 dead, 1,500 arrests) and Detroit, Michigan (43 dead, 7,200 arrests).

By the middle of July it seemed as though Portland would escape the violence sweeping the country, but 50 years ago next month, the city's decades-long practice of discrimination and displacement had finally reached its boiling point.

The Frustrations Start

Oregon's history of legal discrimination is well-documented, and is much a part of state lore as the Lewis and Clark expedition. Upon being granted statehood in 1859, Oregon was the only state in the union to prohibit Blacks from living on or owning property within its borders—and this ban was not officially revoked until 1926. The Ku Klux Klan was prominent in the state in the 1920s, holding considerable sway over Oregon police and political leaders. The 15th Amendment—giving African Americans the right to vote—did not become state law until 1959, nearly 90 years after being ratified by the US Congress.

What could be considered Portland's first Black community was situated west of the Willamette River on Broadway Avenue, since many African American men worked for the train station and the downtown hotels. With the arrival of World War II, the Black population skyrocketed, from 2,000 to 20,000. Most of these newcomers were housed in a newly and hastily constructed public housing community called Vanport, situated between Portland and Vancouver in the floodplain of the Columbia River. In the early 1940s, it was Oregon's second-largest city, and the largest public housing project in the nation, with African Americans making up 40 percent of its population. When the Columbia River flooded on May 30, 1948, Vanport was home to 18,500 people who suddenly found themselves without a place to live. 6,300 of those who lost their homes in the flood were Black, and quickly had to find their way in an unwelcoming and at times hostile city—a city listed by the *Journal of Social Work* in 1945 as “the worst Northern City in Racial Relations.”

Following the war, Blacks began moving in large numbers across the Willamette River to Albina. Originally home to a large European immigrant community, the neighborhood, straddling the border of North and Northeast Portland, had seen a slow influx of African American residents as early as 1910, but after the Vanport flood the Black population of Albina surged. This was no accident, but a calculated bit of legal and commercial maneuvering, as a city-approved Code of Ethics forbade realtors and bankers from selling or giving property loans to minorities in white neighborhoods. “Redlining” effectively confined 73 percent of the city's African American population to Albina. In the 10 years between 1950 and 1960, 7,000 more Blacks had moved into the neighborhood, while 23,000 whites had moved out—many of them relocating to the recently built suburbs. By the beginning of the decade, African Americans comprised four percent of the city's population, while 80 percent of Black Portlanders were crowded into Albina.

Darrell Millner, professor emeritus of Black studies at Portland State University, explains that what's often referred to as the “Black community” is not an organically formed entity, but a product of the existing power structure.

“The Black community was an artificial creation of a segregated society as we knew it in the '50s and '60s,” he says. “The composition of the neighborhood is not in the control of the Black population. The Black population is always reacting to what the dominant population is doing. And that's the key dynamic.”

During the war years, Central Albina—the area around Williams and Russell in particular—became the heart of the community with bustling jazz clubs, salons, record stores, and restaurants. By the mid-1950s, however, the area was beset by encroaching blight, and city officials had singled out the area for urban renewal. Rather than invest in the existing community, the city decimated it. Construction of the I-5 freeway, Memorial Coliseum, and a proposed Emanuel hospital expansion (later abandoned) led to the loss of more than 1,100 homes and hundreds of businesses in Central Albina. Residents were given 90 days to find new housing. Many African American residents viewed urban renewal as yet one more example of “Negro removal.”

The Black population in the Eliot neighborhood shrank by two-thirds, and many relocated to King, Boise, and Humboldt, an area taking up roughly two-and-a-half square miles. Black residents made up 84 percent of the Boise neighborhood, while remaining only six percent of the city's total population. Since African Americans made up just one percent of Portland's 700-plus police officers, friction between the Black residents of Albina and Portland Police was inescapable. A clash was inevitable.

Henry Stevenson, a military veteran who moved from Washington, DC, to Portland in 1960 recalls, "Black folk had it rough in Portland... The system, especially the police, had a whole lot of feet on Black peoples' necks."

Frank Fair, a youth worker with the Church Community Action Program, put it this way: "When you get to feeling locked in—that's when the frustrations start."



How North Williams looked in 1967. OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NO. BB004613

Sunday at the Park

The afternoon of Sunday, July 30, 1967 was bright and warm. Around 100 people—most of them young and Black—congregated in Irving Park, directly south of Fremont, anticipating a rumored demonstration with speakers and events. Ostensibly promoted by the Ad Hoc Committee for Black Culture, the "Sunday at the Park" was to feature a performance by the Black Arts Theatre from San Francisco, live music, a photo exhibit from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and a special visit from Black Panther Party Minister of Information and Soul on Ice author, Eldridge Cleaver. During the week leading up to the demonstration, many of the city's older Black leaders and clergy members, including respected pastor and civil rights activist Reverend John H. Jackson from Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, had gone around the neighborhood trying to dissuade young people from attending, but their efforts were roundly rebuffed.

Though riots had been exploding across the country, Oregon Governor Tom McCall, speaking at a news conference in late July days before the park rally, acknowledged race relations in Oregon were not ideal, yet claimed they were better than in other states. He did not believe that the

waves of violence visiting other states would hit Oregon. Regardless, the governor's assessment didn't stop local law enforcement from amping up surveillance of the park. Increased police presence—including seven cars of plainclothes detectives and two officers posted on a nearby hill, watching the park through binoculars—only further inflamed tensions.

As the afternoon wore on, there was no sign of Eldridge Cleaver or the Black Arts Theatre, prompting new rumors they had been detained by law enforcement somewhere along the way. Young Black activists set up a platform with a PA system and microphone to address the crowd about police brutality and resistance. Some of the more militant activists led chants of “kill the honkies,” “Whitey, go home,” and “burn the town down.”

Neighborhood Service Center worker Erma Hepburn, who had been dispatched to survey the scene at the park, later reported to the Oregonian: “I heard one of them say it was rumored they were there to incite a riot. He said that wasn't true. But he added, ‘If you're here to talk revolution, then that's something else.’”

The first reported incident happened at 5:18 pm, when a group of Black youths began to throw bottles and rocks through the windows of the Lampus discount store. Shortly after, at around 5:30 pm, a group of four or five young Black men—in their late teens and early 20s—surrounded and attacked Ira Williamson, a 51-year-old white employee of the Portland Parks Department who was there watching the rally. Williamson suffered bruises to his ribs, cuts to his mouth, and five broken teeth. His wristwatch and wallet were also stolen. He was rescued and brought to the hospital by Linzi Roy, an African American school teacher then working in the Park Bureau's summer program. Another white man, Vernon Wolvert, who lived across the street from the park, was also allegedly attacked, but not severely injured and didn't require medical attention.

By 6:30 pm, the small rally at the park had developed into a neighborhood-wide clash. Reports of rock throwing directed towards cops and motorists motivated police to seal off a 30-block area of the neighborhood and request additional officers to the scene. Many businesses along the single block between Fremont and Beech on Union Avenue (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) had their windows broken by rocks or bottles.

And soon after came the first reports of firebombing.

Just after 10 pm, fires destroyed the Sav-Mor Food Market on Mississippi Avenue, and a two-story building on Union Avenue—housing both the Union Coin Operated Laundromat and American Auto Parts, Inc. Police officers fired on 18-year-old Jesse Johnson after witnessing him allegedly tossing a Molotov cocktail through the window of the Alberta Furniture Store. Johnson survived, but suffered buckshot injuries to his back, legs, and stomach. He was booked on arson charges with a \$5,000 bail.

One of the cops on the scene was a young white officer named Tom Potter, who would eventually go on to become North Precinct captain, chief of police, and then mayor of Portland from 2005 to 2009. However, on the night of July 30, 1967, he was just a young beat cop in over his head.

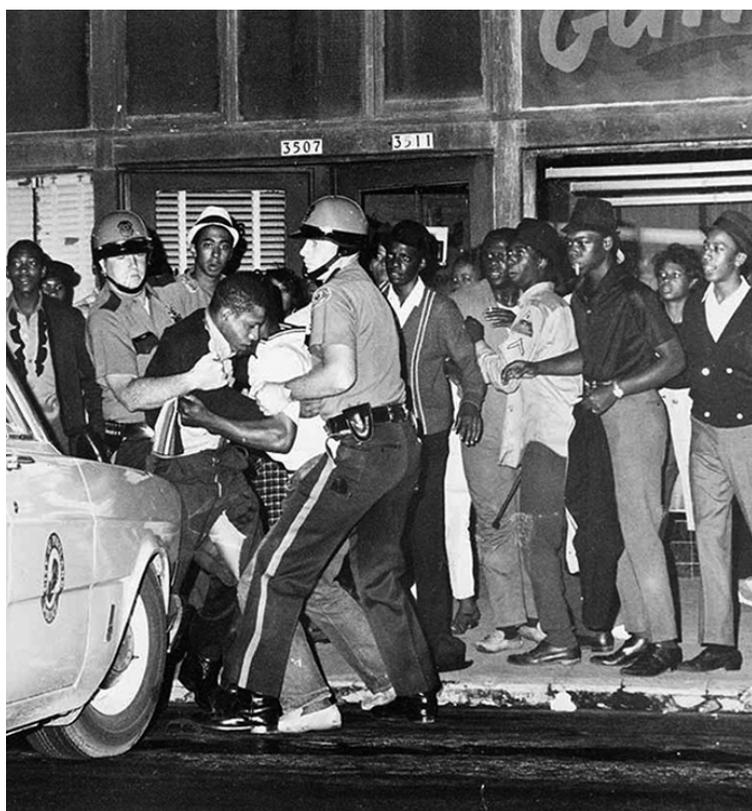
“At the time, Portland was very unprepared for anything like this,” Potter recalled in an interview for OPB's Oregon Experience. “We didn't have any riot gear. What I was told was, ‘Bring whatever long gun you have from home, and we're going to be going out on patrol....’ During the night, I can remember standing on what was then Union Avenue and Fremont, and every building I could see was on fire, and I could hear the ‘pop pop’ of guns.”

Police Inspector Frank Springer, speaking at an evening news conference, insisted that the disturbances happening at that moment should not be considered a riot. Yet the situation had gotten serious enough to warrant an emergency visit by Governor McCall. The governor arrived in Portland at around 9 pm, and convened with Mayor Terry Schrunk at the governor's suite at

the Hilton Hotel, along with heads of the Oregon National Guard, Oregon's adjutant general, the head of the state police, and other members of the governor's staff. McCall and Schrunk then reconvened at the mayor's office, where they set up a command post for the night.

At the height of the disturbance, approximately 300 young men and women—predominantly African American, but with some whites—were in the streets, largely confined by police to the vicinity of Upper Albina. Two hundred police officers had been ordered into the area, with another 200 nearby, ready to provide assistance. Helmeted officers rode four and five to a car, ordered to keep their rifles and shotguns inside the vehicle, out of public view. The Oregon National Guard's 2nd Battalion of the 218th Field Artillery, with 500 men in reserve at the Portland Air Base, was on notice with another 6,000 reservists at home.

Nineteen people were arrested by midnight, including six juveniles and three whites, mostly on charges of vandalism. After midnight, police continued to arrest both Blacks and whites for being in violation of a newly imposed city curfew ordinance. By 12:30 am Monday morning, Police Inspector Springer declared that the situation "remains clear and under control." Before the sun came up Monday morning, however, the police would make 28 more arrests, and the



Portland Fire Department would receive 15 more fire calls, bringing the total number of reported fires to 26, with extensive property damage to the immediate area surrounding Fremont and Union Avenue.

Covering the unrest for the Oregon Journal, Ralph Friedman quoted a male African American resident of the area who wanted readers to understand the root cause of the violence. "Tell them the white merchants on Union Avenue could have 10 Union Avenues for all the profit they've drained out of us," the man said. "Tell them Portland stinks behind its roses. Tell them we're not monkeys and this isn't a zoo."

Portland police struggle with Black youths during the Albina riots of 1969. OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NO. BB5811

Separate and Unequal

After the disturbance, public reaction was mixed, with a majority of residents on record renouncing the violence and praising the relatively subdued police reaction. Older Black residents of Albina were especially critical of the disturbance, attributing it to the influence of outside agitators. Reverend John H. Jackson asserted that people had driven up to Portland from California specifically to stir up local youths.

Portland's two leading newspapers at the time, the Oregon Journal and the Oregonian, published photos, statements, and reactions to the disturbance, some less nuanced than others. Few of the articles connected the events in Albina to the uprisings taking place in other cities across the country. In a front-page article in the Oregonian, under the headline "Negroes Break Windows, Set Fires," staff writer Stan Federman reported: "Roving bands of Negroes, most of them teenagers, surged through the streets Sunday night in a sudden outburst of vandalism in the Albina section of Portland." (Not mentioned were several white males who had also been arrested, many of whom were picked up in the area for carrying guns in their cars.) A photograph of a broken window superimposed with a small white arrow was captioned: "Arrow points to billiard ball which was tossed through window of Oregon State Liquor Store at 3532 NE Union Ave. by gang of Negro teenagers."

At a joint press conference, Governor McCall and Mayor Schrunk acknowledged the Black community's frustration over inadequate education funding and programs, but neither considered the event a race riot, and they, too, blamed the violence on a small group of outsiders. The troublemakers, Governor McCall claimed, did not represent the larger Black community.

"The mood of Portland's non-whites is one of intolerance toward violence," the governor said. "The seeds of hatred find inhospitable soil here in the city of Portland."

A 15-year-old African American boy, who had been arrested during the disturbance and taken to Donald E. Lang Juvenile Detention, had a different opinion: "The riot spirit is catching," he told the Oregonian. "As long as there are riots and trouble in other cities, there will be riots here. I know it's not going to do anyone any good... but there's nothing I can do about that."

Later that Monday afternoon, at about 4:30 pm, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into a pile of tires at a service station on Union Avenue, while a crowd of approximately 80 young Black men and women had gathered near Irving Park, throwing rocks and bottles at the windows of passing vehicles. Police set up a traffic barricade at Union and Fremont, as the crowd continued to throw objects at police cars, motorists, and homes. By 8 pm, Mayor Schrunk ordered police to clear the park and "start making plenty of arrests." Nearly 150 police officers, carrying rifles and shotguns, again moved into the area, supported by three 18-man tactical operations platoons specializing in riot control. By midnight, after several reports of firebombing and arson, police declared the situation calm and under control. There were 68 arrests and 13 reports of fires.

As the city awoke following a second night of violence, residents—both in Albina and throughout the city—were appalled. Letters to newspaper editors, chief of police, and the mayor all denounced the violence, reasserting the popular view that outsiders from California, or else a small group of local rabble-rousers, were responsible. Some Portland residents, like Margaret Luyben, suggested Mayor Schrunk authorize Portland Police to shoot any "militant black negroes" seen destroying property.

Despite a brief flare-up on that Tuesday—which saw the firebombing of a fuel company and arrests of 10 adults and 15 juveniles—there were no further reports of disturbances in the area. Police returned to their normal duties after being subjected to 12-hour workdays. As the public mostly heaped praise on the police for their swift and effective response, the mayor then contended with those who saw his response as too reliant on force and large-scale arrests, while others believed the mayor had been too accommodating to vandalism.

Nevertheless, the disturbances near Irving Park sparked a citywide conversation over the city's disengagement from the Albina community, a draconian police presence, inadequate housing, and lack of jobs. Though the overwhelming majority of participants in the clashes were young—and many older residents renounced the violence—these concerns were not unique to the young, nor were they anything new. In the view of some participants, the insurrections in Albina on July

30 and 31 were a show of solidarity with the mood spreading across the United States that summer.

While riots were still taking place throughout the country, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Kerner Commission on July 28, 1967 to study the causes of recent violence and to make recommendations. The report addressed problems stemming from racism, white entitlement, and the failure of federal and state governments to provide housing and education. “Our nation is moving toward two societies,” the report warned, “one Black, one white—separate and unequal.” President Johnson ultimately rejected the Commission’s recommendations and, after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s assassination on April 4, 1968, over 100 cities again erupted in large-scale rioting.

Albina saw turmoil once more, beginning on the night of Friday, June 13, 1969. Following a violent confrontation with police—outside the popular hangout spot Lidio’s Drive-In on Union and Shaver—hundreds of young Black residents traveled throughout the area, throwing bottles and firebombs, assaulting motorists and police officers, and vandalizing property. By early Monday morning, after dozens of arrests and thousands of dollars of property damage, the altercation had come to an end.

In the aftermath of this new disturbance Kent Ford, along with Percy Hampton, announced the formation of the Portland Black Panther Party. During their decade-long tenure, the Panthers ran a children’s breakfast program, operated free medical and dental clinics, and condemned what they saw as a racist and repressive police presence in Albina.

“We want fascist pigs out of the Albina district,” Ford declared. “We don’t need those pigs here.”



Albina’s boarded-up storefronts in 1968 set the stage for predatory lenders. OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NO. BB004615

Then and Now

The 1970s and ’80s were acutely devastating to Albina, owing largely to city disinvestment and housing abandonment. As Black families moved out, gangs and drug pushers moved in, taking advantage of an untapped market and introducing crack cocaine to the troubled district. Afflicted

by gang warfare, economic stagnation, predatory lenders, speculators, and absentee landlords, the percentage of Black Portlanders in Albina ultimately shrank by more than a fifth toward the end of the '80s, with many of Portland's Black population moving east of Albina, to outer Southeast and Gresham, known now as "the numbers." Albina's population decreased by nearly 27,000 since 1950, and the value of homes dropped to 58 percent of the city's median.

And then in the '90s, for the first in 50 years, Albina's population began to grow again—though not with African Americans. Attracted by affordable home prices and city reinvestment, whites descended on the area. By the turn of the century, less than one-third of Black Portlanders remained in Albina.

In her 2007 study "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000," Karen J. Gibson, associate professor of urban studies and planning at Portland State University, offers a view of gentrification as "not just a matter of individual preferences for older centrally located neighborhoods; it is a matter of financial and governmental decisions. When capital is withheld from certain areas, predatory lenders move in to fill the void."

The Albina community today is nearly unrecognizable compared to 50 years ago. Northeast Portland is now popular for its boutiques, art galleries, and artisanal ice cream shops, while North Williams Avenue is once again a thriving community—albeit one in which African Americans are largely absent. If the Black community had been created artificially by the existing power structure—the dominant population—then that same system has been responsible for destroying it.

Since the last presidential election, cities across the country have been beset by street protests and riots, often accompanied by property destruction, but Portland has arguably seen more than any other American city. While addressing different grievances, some similarities can be made to the riots of 1967, namely nonhierarchical (and at times chaotic) strategies, a heavy-handed police response, and a mayor on the defensive. Black Lives Matter and Don't Shoot PDX have more in common with the direct action mobilizations of the late '60s and '70s than with the nonviolent marches of their parents' or grandparents' generation.

But not until the May 26 deaths of two innocent white men on the MAX train—murdered while defending two Black girls from a white supremacist—had the veil of Portland's long history of racism been so violently pulled back. While white residents have subsequently begun to make an effort to listen to the concerns of Portland's vulnerable people of color, it's too soon to know whether these efforts will bring about any changes, or whether they are merely symbolic. In the meantime, Black Portlanders continue to move further away from the city, away from a familiar and supportive community, and—with a population still lingering near six percent—they have reason to feel, as they did 50 years ago, like second-class citizens. The city has long taken for granted its status as a progressive paradise, but the Albina riots, while not widely known or studied, can serve as a caution for the present day.

As Shelton Hill, executive director of the Urban League, said on the Monday following the two days of rioting in 1967: "The only good that could possibly come out of a thing like this is that it may shake Portland out of its complacency. It shows that these things can happen anywhere."

Further reading: Karen J. Gibson, *Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment: 1940-2000* and *The Portland Black Panthers: Empowering Albina and Remaking a City*; Lucas N.N. Burke and Judson L. Jeffries. Special thanks to Dr. Darrell Millner, and Joshua Joe Bryan for his 2013 PSU thesis, *Portland, Oregon's Long Hot Summers: Racial Unrest and Public Response, 1967-1969*.

If You Build It...

By Dirk VanderHart

June 21, 2017

WHEN YOU CREATE more shelter space, people use it.

After months upon months of speculation on what the county's next tally of its homeless population would reveal—would it be larger, or a lot larger?—this simple fact was a central takeaway when officials finally released numbers on Monday, June 19.

Yes, the homeless population is larger. After tens of millions of public dollars spent, data analyses pointing toward how to spend it, and record numbers of homeless residents being placed into housing, the [latest point-in-time count](#) suggests the city's homeless population has grown by about 10 percent in the last two years—from 3,801 in 2015 to 4,177 as of February 22.

That tally is actually an undercount of people who meet the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "homeless," officials say, and doesn't begin to encompass the wider range of people who might be involuntarily sleeping on the couch or floor of an acquaintance for lack of better options.

The number of homeless women, people with disabilities, homeless people within certain minority groups, and even veterans—a huge point of emphasis for more than a year—is up. So is the number of chronically homeless individuals, the hardest cases to serve.

All that's not the same as saying those millions of dollars went to waste. Figures from the city/county Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) show that the county's finding people places to live at a record pace—roughly 1,900 households between July and March alone. Thousands more are being offered rent assistance in an attempt to prevent them from sliding into homelessness in the first place. And in the last year and a half, officials have created nearly 630 new emergency shelter beds.

Which gets us to that first point.

Even as the homeless population swells, the count suggests fewer people are on the street—or anyway, that fewer people were on the street on February 22 compared to a single night in 2015. This year's street count located 1,668 individuals sleeping without shelter in the county's streets and green spaces. That's a nearly 12 percent drop from two years ago.

At the same time, the number of people who were staying in emergency shelter had roughly doubled. When you create more shelter space, people use it.

Public officials looking for a bright spot pointed to the lower unsheltered numbers on Monday.

"The data that we do have demonstrates slivers of hope, or at least some real progress on the unsheltered side," Mayor Ted Wheeler told the executive board of A Home for Everyone (AHFE), the community task force that's strategizing on how to battle homelessness.

"Compared to other cities on the West Coast, we are behind," County Chair Deborah Kafoury told news cameras (actually meaning that Multnomah County's increases are smaller than other communities'), "which is good news."

As homelessness has fallen nationwide, national [data has showed](#) states on the West Coast have seen upticks in their houseless populations.

While changing methodologies can skew things, reports issued this year suggest the homeless population in Seattle's King County might be up 16 percent in the last two years (and its unsheltered population up 45 percent), and Oakland's Alameda County is up 39 percent (unsheltered up 61 percent). In Los Angeles County, the massive homeless population has

increased by 30 percent, to nearly 57,800, while the unsheltered population has shot up 38 percent in the last two years.

San Francisco's homeless population, meanwhile, [decreased by half a percent](#).

Officials seized on those numbers Monday, as proof that Portland is outperforming other West Coast cities, though differences in the way each community conducts the counts make it hard to claim victory with certainty.

And based on Portland's own expectations, the result amounts to something of a defeat.

In 2015, as Portland and Multnomah County pledged \$30 million toward fighting homelessness and the city formally declared a housing state of emergency, then-Mayor Charlie Hales and other officials made a tantalizing claim.

By putting sustained funding toward the right resources, the AHFE coalition believed it could slash Multnomah County's homelessness problems in half by 2017.

That money was spent—and the city and county have upped the ante with more than \$50 million earmarked for homelessness services in the next year—but the results haven't come to pass.

Officials say the problem is the ongoing severity of the region's housing market. In 2015, they say, no one was predicting just how many homeless residents would continue to flow into the system.

"Part of that model assumed the rate at which people were becoming homeless would stay the same," says Denis Theriault, a spokesperson for the JOHS (and former Mercury employee).

"Very clearly that did not stay the same. The inflow has apparently gone up, gotten worse. Housing has gotten more expensive. That impacts everything our service providers do."

Here are some specific takeaways from this year's count. The findings are preliminary, and the county plans to release a more extensive report in coming months.

- There are more homeless veterans today, despite Portland "functionally ending" veteran homelessness by creating a system to get people housed quickly. The data showed 446 self-identified homeless vets, compared to 422 two years before (though changes in methodology prevent a precise apples-to-apples comparison).
- The number of homeless families, a point of concern in the 2015 count, remained roughly the same this year, but many more were sheltered this time around. The county saw a nearly 50 percent decrease in unsheltered families.
- The number of chronically homeless Portlanders has increased by 24 percent, a major concern for officials. The vast majority of those people, 71 percent, are unsheltered.
- There are fewer African Americans experiencing homelessness—positive news for another group that generated particular concern in 2015. This year's count found 185 fewer Black people, including a 57 percent reduction in those without shelter.
- The number of Native Americans who are homeless ballooned—from 82 in 2015 to 424 in 2017. Officials chock that up to an "unexplained issue" in the 2015 count they say resulted in the Native American population being undercounted. People of color as a whole are overrepresented in Portland's homeless population, but Native Americans see a particularly stark disparity. Their rate of homelessness is roughly four times higher than their percentage of the population.
- The number of homeless women increased, from 1,161 in 2015 to 1,355 this year. Again, the number of homeless women without shelter had decreased.

- Fewer people reported being homeless for a short period of time, and more reported being homeless for a long period of time. Of people responding to a survey given to unsheltered Portlanders, 36 percent said they'd been homeless for less than a year, compared to 41 percent in 2015. In addition, 32 percent said they'd been homeless for two years or more, compared to 23 percent in 2015.

Hall Monitor: Teddy Wheels and the Mayoral Dagger

By Dirk VanderHart

June 21, 2017

IN A CITY slavishly committed to its dusty commission form of government, Ted Wheeler's announcement last week amounted to a serious power move.

One of Wheeler's sole powers as mayor is to shuffle and deal the administration of city bureaus as he sees fit. And after taking control of all of them in late April while hashing out a budget, Wheeler made a call that surprised some people in City Hall last Thursday, June 15.

For the first time anyone I spoke with can remember, the mayor gave one commissioner—Amanda Fritz—control of a single bureau.

The troubled Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC), which Fritz had overseen since January, will remain with Wheeler. For the foreseeable future, Fritz has the run of the city's parks bureau, which she was handed early in former Mayor Charlie Hales' tenure. That's it.

This doesn't happen. For context, back in 2010 there [was a to-do](#) when then-Mayor Sam Adams took out frustrations with Commissioner Dan Saltzman by assigning him the Bureau of Environmental Services, the tiny police and fire pension fund, and the administration of the city's Children's Investment Fund.

That portfolio was small enough for the Oregonian to [wonder aloud](#) whether Saltzman was being "underutilized" because of a personal beef. But it was still larger than Fritz's is now.

Viewed in that light, Wheeler's decision is nothing short of damning.

Unlike the 2010 scuffle, the move doesn't have apparent roots in a personal grudge. It's not even wholly unexpected.

For weeks prior to the mayor's announcement, there'd been speculation Fritz might not get BOEC back. At the time, City Hall was bracing for a report from City Ombudsman Margie Sollinger that showed the bureau had flubbed its calculation of hold times for 911 calls for more than a decade, and that leadership had kept that news hidden from public view.

It was a ripe opportunity for a new mayor—who's seen more than his share of public reproach in the last six months—to seize on a problem, and to show the community he's out to fix it.

Before Sollinger had even publicly issued her report, Wheeler had drawn up a resolution aimed at addressing its harsh conclusions.

To be clear, the leadership failures at BOEC aren't primarily on Fritz, who'd run the bureau for mere months (and had also controlled it years before). Still, the fact that Wheeler declined to give the commissioner anything to take in its place is a telling reflection of his confidence in her management ability.

It's also the second time this year that Wheeler has stripped Fritz of a valued bureau. He gave rookie Commissioner Chloe Eudaly the Office of Neighborhood Involvement in January.

What this means for Fritz and Wheeler's public relationship will be interesting to behold.

In a statement, Fritz said only that she was “disappointed” by the mayor’s decision, but would turn her free time toward combating systemic racism and a rise in hate crimes. City Hall staffers say that beneath that anodyne pronouncement, feelings are bruised in Fritz’s office.

That’s a calculation Wheeler will certainly have made before pulling the trigger—not that his office is owning up to it.

“The mayor and Commissioner Fritz have enjoyed a collegial working relationship,” Wheeler spokesperson Michael Cox told me. “We expect that to continue.”

The Montavilla Neighborhood Association Wants City Hall to Stop Homeless Sweeps On Its Turf

By Dirk VanderHart

June 20, 2017

The Montavilla Neighborhood Association says it's sick of the camp sweeps that temporarily displace members of Portland's growing homeless population, only to see them return a short while later.

So on Monday, the association's board passed what might be a first-of-its-kind resolution for a Portland neighborhood. It's asking City Hall to stop the sweeps.

"The Montavilla Neighborhood Association Board of Directors has passed a resolution opposing further sweeps of homeless camps within the Montavilla Neighborhood Boundaries," reads [an announcement posted earlier today](#) on the neighborhood association's web page. "Our Board of Directors finds these sweeps to be an ineffective waste of taxpayer dollars that may violate the constitutional and human rights of the individuals who have their camps swept. Whether or not rights are violated, the sweeps are inhumane and do not result in positive outcomes for the homeless or for adjacent housed residents as the camps almost always return days, weeks, or months later or migrate to another neighborhood becoming another neighborhood’s problem."

The resolution, passed by the MNA's board in a not-quite-unanimous vote, asks the city to cease sweeping homeless camps in the Montavilla neighborhood, which sits [between Mount Tabor and interstates 84 and 205](#).

The association is also calling on Portland City Council to bring together a wide array of stakeholders that can "develop a responsible 5-year plan to address homelessness" by pursuing long term solutions: affordable housing, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and more. (The [A Home For Everyone](#) task force is pursuing many of those same things).

Lastly, Montavilla neighbors are asking other neighborhood associations to join their call against sweeps. Here's a [copy of the resolution](#) the neighborhood association approved.

Monday's vote came the same day officials revealed that Portland's homeless population appears to have [increased by 10 percent since 2015](#), though the number of unsheltered homeless residents has actually decreased as the city opened more shelter space. And it comes at a time when Mayor Ted Wheeler has allocated [more money to camp cleanups and sweeps](#), and has placed a premium on working with various Portland-area governments to coordinate cleanups in response to [hundreds of weekly complaints](#).

The arguments raised by the MNA aren't new. Homeless advocates have said for years that camp sweeps only disrupt people's already difficult lives, without helping them find homes or address other issues. Wheeler has agreed with that sentiment, but also placed an emphasis on not allowing large numbers of homeless campers to convene in one area. He's had [sharp words](#) in

recent days for the enormous camps that [sprang up on the Springwater Corridor](#) trail under Mayor Charlie Hales.

It's unclear how Wheeler will respond to the MNA's resolution. A spokesman has assured the Mercury he will get back to us. We're also waiting to speak with MNA Board Chair Jonnie Shaver about the decision.

Update, Wednesday, 9 am: We got ahold of Shaver, the MNA board chair, who explains the board doesn't view its resolution as anything controversial or out-of-step with its other efforts—such as creating a warming shelter for the homeless during the winter's snow storms.

"For us it was just a continuation of that process of supporting our neighbors," Shaver says.

Homelessness has grown more visible in Montavilla as in many parts of the city in the last year—particularly near the intersection of NE Halsey and 82nd, Shaver says. The issue is wearing increasingly on neighbors, but the MNA board believes that sweeping homeless communities both pushes the problem to other neighborhoods, and has the potential to increase crime when people lose their belongings.

"Camps pop up, they're swept, they pop up again," Shaver says. "It's untenable."

The MNA has been working to get more needle disposal containers and public restrooms to help address the problem, focusing on more hygienic circumstances rather than pushing campers elsewhere. Shaver's not sure what type of reaction to expect from Wheeler.

We're still waiting on a response from Wheeler's office.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Ankeny Apartments project returning before City Council

*By Kent Hohlfeld
June 21, 2017*

A revised plan for the Ankeny Apartments project will go before the Portland City Council this afternoon. Developer Landon Crowell appealed to the City Council after the Portland Design Commission denied approval for his original design at 1122 S.E. Ankeny St.

Late Tuesday night, Crowell sent to the DJC an email stating that he, the neighborhood association and neighbors to the south of the project site had come to an agreement on the new design. According to Crowell, he met with other project stakeholders, and neighbors to the north of the site didn't comment on the new plan.

The biggest change to the project is a return to cedar siding material, according to Crowell. The height of the Southeast 12th Avenue elevation was reduced to 58 feet from 75 feet.

The original design of the L-shaped complex called for 17 luxury apartments. It was poised to become the city's first and nation's seventh net-zero-energy multifamily structure.

During the first appeal hearing for the project on April 12, the City Council requested that the development team try to iron out differences with the Buckman Community Association. The hearing was then extended twice so that discussions with various stakeholders could take place.

Editor's note: This story will be updated, following today's City Council hearing.

The Portland Business Journal

Portland developer kicks in \$375,000 to fund downtown parks study

By Jon Bell

June 19, 2017

The developer behind one of the largest current construction projects in downtown Portland has kicked in \$375,000 to fund a master plan for the South Park Blocks.

[Walter Bowen](#), president of BMP Real Estate Group, announced the contribution to the Portland Parks Foundation in a release today. The funding comes as part of the public benefit component of Bowen's Broadway Tower project at the corner of Southwest Broadway and Southwest Columbia Street.

That project is a 19-story hotel and office building. [Under construction since last year](#), the building will include a 180-room Radisson RED hotel and 175,000 square feet of speculative office space.

Broadway Tower has a higher Floor Area Ratio than permitted in the zoning for the area, but according to a write-up on [Next Portland](#), BPM was able to transfer the FAR it needed from another nearby property. The developer is able to do that in part by showing some public benefit to the project, which is where the \$375,000 contribution fits in.

“Parks are an essential ingredient to quality of life and provide an opportunity for all of us to recharge and then re-engage with the work we are passionate about,” Bowen said, in the release. “I am pleased that part of Broadway Tower’s public benefit will be to support developing a master plan that will create parks for all to enjoy.”

The master planning process, to be led by Portland Parks & Recreation, is scheduled to begin next summer. The South Park Blocks, according to the release, were set aside for public use in 1852 and are considered the city's first parks. There are 12 blocks in total.

“Great parks in Portland depend on so many partners, and Mr. Bowen’s contribution will help guide plans for the South Park Blocks that will benefit future generations”, said [Jeff Anderson](#), executive director for the Portland Parks Foundation, in the release.

Bowen, who also developed the Pearl West office building, expects Broadway Tower to be complete in October 2018.