

The Oregonian

Portland should prioritize housing children, people of color, the near-homeless, advocates says

*By Jessica Floum
October 11, 2017*

The Portland City Council is poised to approve spending guidelines for the \$258 million housing bond approved by voters in November to address the city's affordable housing crisis.

The instructions prioritize spending on communities of color, families with children and those experiencing homelessness or who are at "imminent risk of displacement."

If approved by the council Wednesday, those priorities will be the lens through which the housing bond's oversight committee evaluates affordable housing proposals. It will also be the key to moving on to actual projects to increase housing.

With the framework in place, city housing officials will ask for proposals to evaluate beginning Oct. 23, Housing Bureau Director Kurt Creager said. The proposals, he said, must include properties that the city can possess within 120 days of purchasing them and will be evaluated in part based on how close they are to areas with jobs, schools and transit.

Creager said anyone who proposed a project to the city earlier this year should submit their idea again so that his bureau can consider it using the new spending guidelines.

"We've put them all on a side burner until this work was completed so one project doesn't have more of an advantage than the others," Creager said.

Under the guidelines, the oversight committee would evaluate racial equity for all bond investments in building and land acquisition. They would focus on investing in housing opportunities "throughout the city" and close to transportation, schools and grocery stores. The guidelines also encourage the committee to seek community partnerships and emphasize spending in places at risk of becoming unaffordable, outside of current urban renewal areas.

Those focuses are in addition to the bond's stated promise to add 1,300 apartments affordable to households that make 60 percent or less than the area median income. The bond language also promises that 600 of those units will be affordable to those making 30 percent or less of the area median income and that half of the units must have two bedrooms or more to accommodate families.

The proposed framework also requires that up to 300 of the apartments affordable to Portland's lowest earners have access to medical, mental health, addiction and other social services.

"Now that the framework is set to be in place, we will be able to move expeditiously and get the units in the pipeline," mayoral spokesman Michael Cox said.

The adoption would mark a major step toward putting one of the largest resources ever available to council for curbing the problem, and it comes months after Mayor Ted Wheeler, the housing commissioner, drew fire from advocates for moving too slowly on housing.

At Wheeler's request, more than 20 housing advocates, investors and government officials deliberated for five months before drawing up the framework that the council will consider at Wednesday's city council meeting.

After the group decided on spending guidelines, almost 25 housing nonprofits, policy groups and organizations representing communities of different religions, colors and parts of town took another month to consider the priorities.

"We felt the additional time was well worth it," Cox said. "We will be judged ultimately by the results. We think this framework process has improved our chances of positive results."

Creager said the housing bureau has taken a proactive approach to looking at potential investment opportunities.

The bureau has asked real estate agents to screen properties along Barbur Boulevard, he said, to see whether any owners might be willing to sell. While properties in the area do not currently meet the bond spending requirement of being near transit, Creager said the Southwest Corridor light rail project expected to go in will likely increase property values and the cost of living there.

The city is also interested in acquiring development plans and land from developers, some of whom Creager expects will bail on luxury property development plans now that the real estate market is not offering as good of returns, he said. The housing director met with a group of 300 real estate investors Tuesday to express this interest.

Creager said the city is aiming to secure projects by the end of the year and to increase the number of affordable housing opportunities by March.

"We're mindful that the voters approved this in November 2016, so we want to be responsive and start to show the pipeline (of new projects) as quickly as possible," Creager said.

Willamette Week

State Officials Say I-5 in the Rose Quarter Poses a Deadly Danger. Police Reports Undercut That Claim.

*By Rachel Monahan
October 11, 2017*

Adding lanes to the highway would not have prevented the two deaths cited by ODOT.

The proposal to widen Interstate 5 at the Rose Quarter had hit a speed bump.

At two public hearings last month, a string of Portland transportation and environmental advocates lined up to argue the project was a waste of nearly half a billion dollars.

Then, on Sept. 14, an Oregon Department of Transportation official provided a rejoinder. Policy and development manager Kelly Brooks testified that adding two new lanes and wider shoulders to I-5 at the Rose Quarter would address safety. And she told the City Council the highway interchange was deadly.

"It's unfair to say we don't have any severe crashes," said Brooks. "Between 2010 and 2014, we had two fatalities." (She also mentioned seven serious injuries.)

In exchanges with the press, ODOT officials have repeated Brooks' line of argument—that the Rose Quarter project is about safety. That's a particularly compelling argument because Portland City Hall has committed itself to eliminating traffic deaths.

"The primary purpose of this project is to address a critical safety need," emails ODOT spokesman Don Hamilton.

But adding lanes to the highway would not have prevented the two deaths cited by ODOT.

Both deaths were of homeless men who walked onto the highway in the middle of the night, according to police reports obtained by WW.

In the 2010 case, the mental health of the man who walked onto the road may have been a factor, according to a relative.

"He had a lot of mental health stuff that was going on," says the man's sister-in-law. "We're not sure if he was taking a shortcut home or something else was going on."

In the other case, in 2013, the man who died crossing the highway registered a blood alcohol level of 0.294 percent, according to a police report, more than three times the legal limit for drivers.

In neither case were drivers faulted. Highway conditions were dry, according to police reports, although in 2013, a street light was out.

"They've been trying to do the equivalent of greenwashing, but for safety," says economist Joe Cortright, a longtime ODOT critic lobbying against the project. "They've said crash, crash, crash all the time. This is actually one of the safest parts of the transportation system. On average, [the interstate] is about five times safer than the average arterial streets in the city."

In selling the \$450 million highway project—and encountering predictable opposition in a car-unfriendly town—ODOT and city officials haven't been able to present a justification that resonates with Portlanders.

State officials initially pitched the project as a way to help move freight through Portland more efficiently, but now their official talking points highlight safety. The City Council, which approved the plan back in 2012, still hasn't decided whether it will move forward.

State funding for the I-5 project was approved this spring as part of Gov. Kate Brown's transportation package. It's up for debate again as part of the city's planning process, specifically the Central City 2035 Plan. Four of the five city commissioners have said they support the project, with Commissioner Chloe Eudaly as a possible lone dissenter.

The project represents a massive public investment—larger than the \$64 million the Portland gas tax is projected to bring in over four years, and larger than the \$258 million housing bond.

Yet ODOT has not settled on a coherent argument for the project.

In a phone interview with WW, ODOT project manager Megan Channell said the project could save commuters 2.5 million driving hours a year. Yet Channell also says there are no firm answers whether it would simply move a bottleneck up the road.

"We can't give you a definitive yes or no," she tells WW, adding that an environmental review of the project is underway to project traffic impacts during and after completion of the project.

ODOT also hasn't been able to show that I-5 at the Rose Quarter is more lethal than other stretches of highway in the city.

ODOT says I-5 southbound through the Rose Quarter scores in the top 5 percent of its highways for number of crashes, but most of these are minor accidents—690 fender benders in five years. The agency believes the project could cut crashes by up to 50 percent, but there's no evidence it would work to limit fatalities.

ODOT did not provide detailed information on the causes of the serious crashes by deadline, and Channell says she had no details on whether they could be prevented by the project.

"There are no engineering elements that can prevent people who want to get out on the highway from getting out on the highway," says Hamilton. "But there are things that we can do to help reduce the number of problems. Fender benders hurt people; they cost them a lot of money. It sounds cute, but it's actually a very serious issue to reduce fender benders."

There are other, state highways in the city where pedestrians, cyclists and motorists have died in greater numbers, including Southeast Powell Boulevard.

Nine people died in crashes on Powell from Southeast 7th Avenue to Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard in the decade from 2005 to 2014. That stretch of state-run highway hasn't been fully funded for upgrades—work that would cost a fraction of the I-5 Rose Quarter project.

In the same decade, the Rose Quarter stretch of I-5 saw three fatalities—the two documented by police reports and a third death, in 2009, that was also of a pedestrian on the highway, according to ODOT data.

The rate of crashes on the Rose Quarter stretch of I-5, according to ODOT data published in June, is lower than on nearly every stretch of Southeast Powell Boulevard, and of 82nd Avenue. Yesterday, the Portland Police Bureau announced another traffic fatality—a person crossing Northeast 82nd Avenue on foot—bringing the total of such fatalities to 33, one more than at this time last year.

"If this location justifies \$450 million for safety, then streets like 82nd and Barbur are owed billions," says Chris Smith, a member of the city planning commission who opposes the project. "When residents of East Portland have twice the chance of dying just walking in their neighborhoods than folks living west of I-205, how can we justify this expenditure at the Rose Quarter?"

The two deaths cited by ODOT might also have been prevented by different public investments. Life expectancy for people living on the streets is low.

"For \$450 million," says Israel Bayer, executive director of Street Roots, "we could be talking about getting hundreds of people off the streets and into housing—period."

Portland Police Officers Racked Up \$1.9 Million in Overtime While Staffing Protests This Past Year

*By Katie Shepard
October 11, 2017*

Here's how much it cost police to monitor each brawl between right-wing nationalists and antifascists.

The latest standoff between so-called "alt-right" protesters and their antifascist adversaries on Oct. 8 was a sleepy affair, attended by less than 150 people.

But cops are racking up overtime hours policing these fringe protesters.

The Portland Police Bureau spent \$1.9 million on overtime policing protests between July 2016 and June 2017. That breaks down to about 31,300 hours of personnel time—the equivalent of a 15-year career.

And that doesn't include any of the material costs associated with protests that can include food and water for officers and pepper spray, rubber bullets and other material resources used to control crowds.

Assistant Chief Chris Davis says overtime pay accounts for most of the costs associated with protests for the bureau.

"We have to try to find out as much as we can to find out what the [protesters'] plan is and try to assess the risks," Davis says. "That's at least as much art as it is science."

It is an expensive art. Here are the most costly protests in recent months.

Portland Police Overtime Costs for Patrolling Protests This Spring and Summer

April 29

A "patriot rally" along Southeast 82nd Avenue following a canceled community parade

Overtime cost: \$28,480

May 1

Organized labor May Day marches

Overtime cost: \$175,180

June 4

An alt-right "free speech" rally in the wake of a double slaying on a MAX train

Overtime cost: \$84,673

Aug. 6

A "Patriot Prayer" rally at Tom McCall Waterfront Park that turned into a brawl

Overtime cost: \$22,120

Total Portland police overtime for protests in fiscal year 2017: \$1.9 million

Correction: Due to an editor's error, this story originally stated that Aug. 6 event took place near the Waterfront Blues Festival. That was a June 30 Patriot Prayer rally.

The Portland Observer

An Unusual Ally

By Danny Peterson

October 10, 2017

Police leader defends NFL protests

Civil rights advocates don't often count on police as allies in their efforts to bring about social and political change. But the controversy over the silent protests by NFL players during the playing of the Nation Anthem at NFL games has the leader of Portland's police union siding with the players.

Daryl Turner, a black member of the Portland Police Bureau and a representative for the association representing officers in collective bargaining, is speaking out to defend the right to

protest, both as citizens and employees of the NFL, not necessarily in support of the content of their demonstrations.

Turner also is the current President of the United Coalition of Public Safety, a group comprised of nine major law enforcement associations across the country, including Portland Police Association, Seattle Police Officers Guild, and San Francisco Police Officers Association.

Turner says the reactions he's gotten from other police officers in Portland about his stance have been mostly positive.

"I think mostly our members understand that the best way to dispel false narratives is to sit down and have a conversation," Turner said.

Turner has reached out to members of the NFL including the players association and the owners and is waiting on a response back from them to organize a round table discussion.

He said players should have the right to protest both as citizens and employees of the NFL. A former member of the military, he stressed that it's his job to protect the rights of others, including the right to free speech.

"Our First Amendment rights are fundamental to who we are as a nation and the hallmark of our liberty. It is time we stop pointing fingers and fueling division, issuing threats, and denigrating those exercising their opinions. If we don't start talking with each other, rather than talking past each other, we will never solve issues facing our communities and police forces," Turner said.

At its peak, around 200 NFL players kneeled rather than stand for the National Anthem last month to conscientiously object to police brutality against African Americans and other issues of racial inequality. The demonstrations came just days after a comment from President Trump to a mostly white audience condemning the mostly black players' participation in the protests.

"Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out. He's fired. He's fired!'" Trump said at a Sept. 22 rally in Alabama.

Opposing that kind of rhetoric, Turner stressed the importance of players' rights as members of a collective bargaining union.

According to City University of New York Law Professor Marc Edelman in a Forbes op-ed, there is little evidence to support it would be legal for an NFL team owner to fire a player for this kind of peaceful demonstration, since the players are under contract.

Players' collective bargaining agreement calls for a formal arbitration process in the case of firing a player, so even if owners did level a complaint against a player, the firing would not necessarily happen by the owner, Edelman said.

In 2016, black males aged 15-34 were nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by law enforcement in police actions, according to a racial disparities report, The Counted. They were killed at four times the rate of young white men.

Though the number of deaths caused by police has fallen slightly since the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in 2014 -- the unarmed black man in Ferguson, Mo. whose death sparked protests in Ferguson and across the country -- there were 1,091 deaths caused by police recorded in 2016, and 169 of those deaths were people who were unarmed.

Turner would like to see a conversation between all representatives of the NFL and on a national scale to start the process of finding solutions.

“As an African American and a police officer, I see both sides of the coin,” Turner said.

OPB

Portland To Decide How To Spend \$250M For Affordable Housing

*By Conrad Wilson
October 10, 2017*

The Portland City Council is scheduled to vote Wednesday on how it will spend more than \$250 million set aside for affordable housing.

The City Council’s plan will lay out how to spend voter-approved bond money to address the ongoing housing crunch.

The city has already used some of the money to buy an apartment complex, the 263-unit Ellington Apartments in Northeast Portland.

The plan will call for at least 1,300 new affordable housing units citywide.

It will focus on housing families, immigrants and refugees. It will also serve communities of color and people experiencing or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

Hundreds Turn Out For Montavilla Neighborhood Elections

*By Amelia Templeton
October 10, 2017*

Hundreds of people in Portland’s Montavilla neighborhood waited more than an hour Monday evening to cast their votes.

They formed a line that snaked down the sidewalk in front of the Montavilla United Methodist Church and wrapped around the block.

It was election night for the Montavilla Neighborhood Association board, one of 95 volunteer groups that provide community input to Portland’s city council.

Such elections often draw just a handful of people, but disagreements over homelessness and the role of political activism in the neighborhood group sparked intense interest in Monday’s vote.

The Montavilla neighborhood is in East Portland, between Mount Tabor and I-205. Its boundaries are I-84 to the north, and Division Street to the south.

“I’ve never seen so many people come out to a neighborhood association meeting,” said Marshall Runkell, chief of staff to Portland Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the city’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement. “It’s clearly touched a nerve in the city.”

Chris Soland was among the Montavilla residents waiting in line to vote Monday night. She said she’d owned a home in the area for 40 years. It was her first time voting in a neighborhood association election.

“How the neighborhood deals with homelessness is an issue for my husband and I,” she said. “We’re here in order to make sure that the representation of the neighborhood reflects the neighborhood.”

Soland said she has compassion for homeless people but is concerned their camping is creating health and safety problems in Montavilla.

“I walk every day, and on my walks, I have picked up needles. I have been picking up human waste,” she said. “It hurts my heart,” she said, “to see the deterioration.”

Ron Thrasher was also waiting in line to vote. He said he’s concerned about the view of homeless people in Montavilla.

“Too many people are identifying all homeless as dirtbag tweakers, which is not true. Because I understand there are a number of reasons for people to be homeless,” he said.

Thrasher said he’d lived in the neighborhood since 1976, and spent many years serving in the military and the National Guard.

“I have friends that have the PTSD. Some of those have fallen through the cracks, some of them have gotten help,” he said.

In the end, five new candidates won seats on the neighborhood association board, and three board members were re-elected, according to preliminary results posted online. The newly-elected board members include Micah Fletcher, who survived a stabbing attack on a TriMet MAX light-rail train this year that killed two people.

In a candidate statement, Fletcher said he will advocate for an anti-racist neighborhood watch group, work on “humane” solutions to homelessness, and work for better outreach to all residents in Montavilla.

Taking A Position On Homeless Sweeps

The controversy started this summer when the Montavilla Neighborhood Association passed a resolution that urged the Portland City Council to stop clearing homeless camps, and noted that the sweeps might be unconstitutional.

The city didn’t change its policy of responding to complaints about camps in the neighborhood. But the backlash to the resolution was swift.

Some neighbors said the board had failed to follow public meeting protocols and had been taken over by far-left activists. They formed a group online, the Montavilla Initiative, and put together a slate of candidates for the association’s October board election.

Then, according to the Portland Tribune, someone circulated an email, revealing that Montavilla Neighborhood Association board member Jonathan Ogden had in March authored a proposal, as part of his work with an activist group, titled “Silent Neighborhood Association Takeover.”

In a blog post, Ogden confirmed that he’d written the document, but characterized it as “overzealous,” and said he never tried to implement the plan.

Interest in the vote intensified further after Fletcher announced he was a candidate for the board.

Then, in a video posted online, Patriot Prayer group leader Joey Gibson said he planned to attend the neighborhood meeting, though he later posted on Facebook that he’d decided against it.

22 Candidates

At the door of the church, volunteers passed out popcorn to the voters and confirmed the addresses of potential voters in Montavilla. The election was open to all who lived in the neighborhood — including renters, homeowners, and homeless people — who were asked to confirm the area where they reside.

“We’re well aware that not everyone has a fixed address these days, unfortunately,” said Yonna Carroll, who was part of the election committee.

Voting was also open to people who own businesses or property in Montavilla.

Inside the church, people sat in tightly packed rows and spilled into an overflow room to listen to stump speeches from the 22 candidates.

The hopefuls included an anarchist, a city planner, a pastor, a phone triage nurse, and a person wearing only a bikini.

Many avoided directly stating their position on how the city should handle complaints about homeless camping.

But divides were clear nonetheless.

Several candidates backed by the “Montavilla Initiative” group made the case that the neighborhood group had become too overtly political.

Portland Considers Loans To Build ADUs To Help Stem Gentrification

“I want to take politics out of the neighborhood association,” said candidate and Montavilla homeowner Joan Joanes. “We have politicians that make policy. We make friends. That’s the way we build our community.”

By contrast, many of the younger candidates argued that neighborhood associations had a history of taking on political issues like development and equity.

“I’m really interested in the transformative history of neighborhood organizing here in Portland, Oregon,” said candidate Olivia Alsept-Ellis. “Maybe we can actually develop the same people power we saw in the ‘60s and ‘70s.”

Five new candidates won seats, and three board members won re-election, according to preliminary results posted online.

None of the eight people elected to the board were candidates from the Montavilla Initiative, the group that formed in opposition to the resolution condemning the city’s sweeps of homeless people.

New board members include Amanda Rhoads, Olivia Alsept-Ellis, David Linn, Antigonus Jarrett, and Micah Fletcher. Returning board members are Jonathan Ogden, Briar Rose Schreiber and Jonnie Shaver.

The results are preliminary and subject to a routine recount by the city’s Southeast Uplift neighborhood coalition.