

# **The Portland Tribune**

## **Sources Say: Poll shows Portlanders dissatisfied**

*By Jim Redden*

*October 19, 2017*

### **Plus, Not everyone welcome in Portland and attacks in 2018 governor's race underway**

The poll commissioned by KGW-TV for its Oct. 9 special on homeless issues had a lot of other bad news for local leaders, too

The DHM Research poll found 85 percent of Portlanders are dissatisfied about the lack of shelter for the homeless.

Pollsters also found 85 percent are dissatisfied with the cost of housing, 82 percent are dissatisfied with traffic congestion, 64 percent are dissatisfied with road maintenance, 49 percent are dissatisfied about crime and public safety, 49 percent are dissatisfied about the availability of good jobs, 42 percent are dissatisfied with the availability of health care for poor people, and 40 percent are dissatisfied with the quality of public schools.

Overall, the poll found 44 percent of Portlanders think the city is moving on the "wrong track," while only 41 percent think it is moving in the "right direction."

You can read the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/yco2kdrd>.

### **Not everyone welcome in Portland**

Organizers of the Oct. 14 forum on affordable housing needs in Southwest Portland wanted to make sure everyone is welcome here. Some participants thought that shouldn't be the case for one group — newcomers with money.

The forum was held to discuss the housing situation in the Southwest Corridor between Portland and Tualatin where a new MAX line is being planned.

As part of a group exercise, all participants were handed out fliers that said "You're Welcome Here" on one side.

After everyone held them up for a photograph, they broke into small groups to discuss their aspirations for the project.

When that was over, a spokeswoman for the only group asked to present its aspiration said, "To build affordable housing for people who are already here and not rich newbies."

### **Attacks in 2018 governor's race underway**

Democratic Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Republican challenger Knute Buehler have not yet started attacking each other in campaign ads. But even though the 2018 primary election won't take place until May 15, their surrogates already are taking shots on their behalf.

For example, on Oct. 13, the Republican Governors Association emailed a news release criticizing Brown's support for a carbon tax slated to be considered in next year's 35-day session of the Oregon Legislature. The email from RGA Rapid Response cited editorials in the Albany Democrat Herald and the Bend Bulletin that said the proposed \$700 million-a-year tax shouldn't be considered during such a short session and would cost consumers too much money.

On the same day, the Democratic Party of Oregon accused Buehler, a state representative from Bend, of flip-flopping on the issue of racial profiling. It sent out an email quoting an editorial in

the weekly Bend Source where Buehler said he voted against the state's new anti-distracted driving law because it could increase racial profiling. The email then noted that Buehler voted against a bill that would have required collection of racial and other data on police stops during the 2016 legislative session.

## **Council sets goal of creating more supportive housing**

*By Jim Redden  
October 18, 2017*

### **Resolution unanimously approved to create 2,000 affordable housing units with services for tenants by 2028**

The City Council took another step to focus Portland's affordable housing programs more on the homeless Wednesday when it unanimously set a goal of creating 2,000 supportive housing units by 2028.

Such units are affordable housing reserved for people with addiction, mental health and other issues who need services to keep them housed. The goal was set out in a resolution sponsored by Mayor Ted Wheeler and commissioners Nick Fish and Chloe Eudaly.

"Achieving this goal will provide greater stability and a higher quality of life for thousands of people," said Eudaly.

An identical resolution will be considered by the Multnomah County Commission on Thursday, Oct. 19. The city and county help fund the existing supportive units in the county, along with Home Forward, the former Housing Authority of Portland.

According to the resolution, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reports that "study after study has shown that supportive housing not only resolves homelessness and increases housing stability, but also improves health and lowers public costs by reducing the use of publicly funded crisis services."

Although there are already around 3,300 such units in the county, the resolution says the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a national leader in the field of housing and homelessness, has identified a need for 2,800 more.

The big unanswered question is how to fund the services. The resolution requires the city, county, Home Forward and the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) to submit a plan for meeting the goal and funding the additional level of services within nine months. It may recommend new revenue sources.

The Metro Council on Oct. 26 will consider a \$150,000 grant request from the joint office to fund a one-year study of the need for more supportive housing in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties. If approved, the grant will be matched by \$29,440 from the joint office to determine where additional units can be built and how to pay for them and the services their residents require.

All of the council members stressed that even creating the 2,000 additional units is not enough to solve the homeless crisis. That requires multiple approaches, they said, including creating more affordable housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness that do not need support services.

Along those lines, last Wednesday the council approved a framework for spending the \$258.4 million affordable housing bond approved by city voters last November. The spending guidelines, drafted by an 18-member advisory commission, say the homeless and those at risk of homelessness should be prioritized for the 1,300 units the money is expected to preserve or create.

"Portland's housing bond is a historic opportunity to stabilize families and mitigate displacement," Mayor Ted Wheeler said. "This is the community's bond, so we took the time necessary for a deliberate and thoughtful community process to get it right. The result is better because of it."

It is the first time the council has officially voted to create so much affordable housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, although many homeless people have occupied such units in projects built with city funds in the past. Also prioritized for housing are children, communities of color, and those who have experienced discrimination.

An Affordable Housing Bond Oversight Committee appointed by the council will consider specific proposals to preserve or build the unit, assuring the projects comply with the framework plan.

None of the projects will be built in urban renewal areas, which have their own funding source. Forty-five percent of all "tax-increment" financing dollars, generated by rising property taxes in urban renewal areas, now are set aside for affordable housing in them.

The moves follow the most recent Point in Time homeless count conducted earlier this year that showed an increasing percent of those without permanent housing have addiction, mental health and other issues that make it difficult for them to transition of the streets.

The spending plan approved last Wednesday by the council also sets a target for 300 units of supportive housing, provided that external funding for services is secured.

The council is also acting amid signs of growing public dissatisfaction of its handling of the homeless crisis. Although the supportive housing resolution and bond measure were sent in motion last year, KGW-TV recently released a poll it commissioned that shows most Portland residents are dissatisfied with the city response to the homeless crisis.

According to the poll, 34 percent of Portlanders have considered moving out of the city because of the problem. Fifty-seven percent are dissatisfied with how Wheeler is addressing homelessness. Nearly the same percentage said they are dissatisfied with the Portland Police Bureau's response to homelessness, and 52 percent are dissatisfied with the city business community's response. Fifty-one percent are dissatisfied with how local news organizations cover the issues, and 40 percent are dissatisfied with local service providers. The poll also found 46 percent are dissatisfied with how Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury is addressing homelessness.

Wheeler acknowledged the unhappiness Wednesday, saying there is "a lot of anger and frustration" over the number of people visibly living on the streets.

The poll was conducted by Portland-based DHM Research as part of a special report on Oct. 9 titled "Tent City USA."

## The Portland Mercury

### Portland's Old Brick Buildings Will Kill You

By Dirk VanderHart

October 18, 2017

#### **But As the City Ponders New Safety Standards, a Group of Property Owners is Fighting Back—and Winning**

IN A CITY almost comically underprepared for seismic doom, 1,640 buildings manage to stand out as especially dicey.

They are churches with towering steeples and longtime community centers. They include Voodoo Doughnut and the Keller Auditorium, but also dozens of schools, charming boutiques, downtown office buildings, and perhaps even the place you sleep every night.

Most basically, they are aging brick buildings that weren't built to withstand an earthquake. Portland has more of them than any city on the West Coast, and when the Big One hits, these "unreinforced masonry" (URM) structures will be among the first things vying to take you out.

As a city-commissioned report noted last year: "Unreinforced masonry buildings in Portland unequivocally pose substantial life safety risks not only to their occupants but also to people on adjacent sidewalks and streets."

Portland's known that URMs are a risk for more than two decades—about as long as we've known that a serious earthquake will occur here at some point in the future. The buildings' unsecured parapets and chimneys are prone to giving out during serious shaking, possibly crushing people walking (or fleeing) below. Their walls are at risk of collapsing and disconnecting from a building's floors, leading to the ugly specter of occupants buried in rubble.

Despite this, decades-old rules meant to encourage safety upgrades have been ineffectual. So since 2014, the city's been taking another crack at the problem, working up new policies that could force building owners to upgrade URM buildings to safeguard against collapse.

Lately, the building owners have been fighting back

As a volunteer URM Policy Committee prepares final recommendations for how Portland should bolster its rules, a vocal group is on the verge of watering down those recommendations—and potentially advocating for regulations that are hardly different from those currently on the books.

The group of URM owners, calling itself Save Portland Buildings, argues that requiring too many safety upgrades will lead to a litany of dire consequences, including demolitions of charming old buildings, tenant displacement, higher rents, and diminished property values. While city officials and emergency planners speak of buildings crumbling when Portland finally experiences the Cascadia subduction zone quake that we know is coming, building owners downplay the risk.

"Do not do this to 1,600 or more building and property owners in the name of safety and fear," reads an October 10 letter from the Hawthorne Boulevard Business Association to city officials. "When or if the earthquake happens, then the properties can be sold and new buildings will rise out of the rubble."

This and similar pleas have had an impact. Earlier this year, the committee working up final recommendations for city council appeared on the verge of pushing strict rules to protect both passersby and occupants—standards recommended by a group of engineers, architects, and

geologists. They would include mandatory upgrades such as stabilizing parapets, cornices, and chimneys so bricks don't topple onto the street below, but also bolting each floor to a building's exterior and bracing the walls to help prevent URMs from collapsing.

At one point, the committee was mulling standards more rigorous than even quake-prone California's, which has had mandatory building upgrades on the books for decades, according to Carmen Merlo, director of the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management.

But at the group's most recent meeting on October 4, the conversation had shifted. Moved by the emotional, often-angry pleas of building owners, the committee appeared ready to back off stricter mandates for roughly 83 percent of the city's URMs.

In the weakest option seriously considered at the meeting, building owners would only be required to secure their chimneys and parapets within a decade—the cheapest safety upgrade on the table, but one that is already supposed to be required and does nothing to assure the safety of people within a URM when a quake hits.

It's possible that a recommendation to city council will also include a requirement that URM owners bolt a building's floors to its walls within 15 years. Even if that's part of the deal, a number of other safety upgrades favored by city officials will likely be left out.

“We're going after something that I would probably consider less than collapse prevention,” Merlo says.

Owners have had success in fighting seemingly common-sense steps, too—such as posting placards on URMs that haven't been upgraded, and making sure tenants are aware of the dangers. As of last month, the policy committee didn't support either move.

It's not that Portland doesn't have laws addressing URM safety—it's just that they're toothless. City code requires seismic upgrades once owners hit certain triggers, such as significantly increasing or changing building occupancy, or conducting extensive renovations. Owners have steadfastly avoided hitting those triggers.

Another provision requires owners to brace their parapets, chimneys, and roofs whenever more than 50 percent of the roof is replaced within a five-year period. Owners have exploited the rule by replacing half their roof, then waiting five years to replace the other half (some also suggest that the city has failed to enforce the provision).

As a result, little more than 20 percent of the city's URMs have been addressed—via demolitions and whole or partial upgrades—since 1995.

“The current regulations,” states a draft report issued in July, “have not proven to be as effective in reducing the risk posed by URM buildings as had been hoped.”

To be clear, URM owners have a point: The cost of an extensive seismic upgrade can outpace the value of an aging building, leaving choices that include bringing in a wrecking ball, selling off the property at a discount, or eating thousands of dollars in fines. If owners can make things pencil out, they're potentially forced to displace tenants—both residential and commercial—while the fixes are made, and raise rents.

But today, even a relatively basic requirement that floors be bolted to walls has owners predicting dire consequences.

“It would be close to \$2 million,” says Pippa Arend, who owns a 109-year-old URM building on Northwest 23rd with 12 residential units. “I would economically be forced into a state of blight, or my building comes down and becomes condos.”

Arend is a rare voice in this discussion: Not only does she own a URM building, but she also lives in it. And Arend's day job, at the homeless services organization *pear*, is also possibly located in a URM, she says. If that building is forced to upgrade and rents rise, she fears the nonprofit will be displaced.

"I feel uniquely in the crosshairs of this," she says. "There's so much potential for unintended side effects."

But Arend is far from alone. Angie Even, who owns a small commercial URM in the Woodstock neighborhood, is at the forefront of the group of building owners pushing back against city regulations.

Even says she first attended a meeting on URMs in September 2016 having never heard the acronym, and quickly became alarmed.

"They said residents would have to be displaced. Nobody could tell me where the people should go," she says. "They said there should be funding. Nobody could tell me where the funding was."

Even organized along with other owners at the meeting, sending out two mailers to recruit support and asking a member's son to build a website. Save Portland Buildings was born—and settled on talking points that they've been pushing at every opportunity.

"It's just going to devastate these small business districts," Even says. "We're not talking about the big buildings. We're talking about the little buildings in these main streets."

There appears to be at least some financial help on the way. Earlier this year, the city successfully lobbied for a new law that grants Oregon cities the ability to offer property tax exemptions to buildings that perform seismic upgrades. There's still no telling how steep the subsidies will be, or how they'll work, but some advocates argue they'll have to cover as much as 80 percent of the cost of upgrades to appeal to building owners.

"We can't mandate [upgrades] until we have economic tools to offset the costs," says Peggy Moretti, executive director of Restore Oregon, who serves on the policy committee.

Others believe the outcry is overblown—and point to the fact that URMs are already at risk. Experts believe there's a 12 to 18 percent chance a devastating magnitude 9.0 earthquake could strike Portland in the next 50 years.

It could hit next month. It could hit next century. It's definitely coming.

"The geologists and seismologists are all lined up," says Walt McMonies, another committee member. "I think these buildings will be piles of bricks if they aren't retrofitted. Bricks are going to be flying all over the place."

McMonies, a former real estate lawyer, has an interest in earthquake science and serves on the state's Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission. He also owns a beautiful 36-unit URM building in Northwest Portland that he recently finished voluntarily upgrading to withstand an earthquake.

"The writing was on the wall," says McMonies, who adds that the \$1.1 million in retrofits he installed will help him get more favorable loan terms and reduce his insurance premiums. "I really love some of these old buildings. To me, it's important to save these guys."

People like Even and Arend roll their eyes at McMonies, painting him as a wealthy attorney who's got more resources than most. But Brian Emerick, a local architect who specializes in seismic retrofits and also serves on the city's policy committee, says he thinks owners are

overstating what seismic upgrades might cost—particularly the watered-down fixes currently under consideration.

“There’s a lot of emotion and unfortunately a lot of misinformation out there,” Emerick says. “The costs, I think, are a lot less than what they’re saying.”

What ultimately comes of this discussion is up in the air. City officials had planned to have a report to city council by next month, but the outcry over URM delayed a decision. The policy committee’s next meeting has been set for November 8, and whatever recommendations it decides upon are only advisory. A more definitive fight will take place before city council later this year. (Mayor Ted Wheeler, who oversees emergency management for the city, tells the Mercury he hasn’t “landed on a particular strategy,” but doubts buildings will be demolished en masse with new regulations.)

Arend, the owner who lives in her own lovely URM building, will be there, arguing for less regulation. She knows that an earthquake is coming, she says, but when asked by the Mercury whether she thinks her building is at risk, she waffles.

“I don’t know how to answer that,” Arend says. “I’m not going to answer that in the positive. I sleep well.”

## **Portland is Plotting to Set Aside 2,000 Apartments For Its Hardest-to-Reach Homeless Residents**

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*October 18, 2017*

Sometime in the next six months or so, local officials are going to present a case for how Portland can dramatically increase housing for its most down-and-out individuals.

In a unanimous and long-ported vote this morning, the Portland City Council voted to order up a report laying the groundwork for 2,000 more units of supportive housing in Multnomah County in the next decade. The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will approve the same thing tomorrow, and both governments will chip in to pay a consultant to draft a report in coming months.

So on one level there's just that: A mundane resolution ordering a report.

On another—and certainly for policy staffers who've flogged the matter—today's vote was more significant.

In a city that in recent years has prioritized building "workforce housing" units—that is, apartments that enable mid-wage workers to live closer in, near their jobs—the vote today signals a focus on the growing number of chronically homeless and disabled people living on the streets. The target for supportive housing is people who suffer from addiction, mental illness, or some other disability, and who have been homeless for a long time or find themselves homeless repeatedly.

"Quite frankly, they are caught in a costly, inefficient, failed system," City Commissioner Nick Fish said at today's hearing. Along with County Chair Deborah Kafoury, Fish has been a leading proponent for ramping up supportive housing, which pairs extremely cheap rents with intensive social services to help people back on their feet. One high-profile example in Portland: The Bud Clark Commons.

The sticking point is that this housing is expensive, though there's an argument it actually saves public dollars in the criminal justice system and other arenas. (The resolution council voted on today suggested that supportive housing costs between \$24 and \$54 a night, far less than a night in jail or the Oregon State Hospital.) A big part of the work in coming months will be piecing together what money exists, and what funding gaps Portland and other entities need to fill.

Portland's identified some money already. As we noted last week, the City Council is aiming to create 300 units of supportive housing with part of the \$258.4 housing bond voters passed last week. But pretty much everyone acknowledges more money will be needed. And Mayor Ted Wheeler—said to be skeptical at first about committing to dramatically expanding supportive housing—hasn't been shy in recent weeks suggesting the city will hike taxes in some regard.

As he told the Mercury recently:

"There are things that we have not done in this community. Cell phone taxes. Some communities tax sugar products. Others dig deeper into their travel and tourism industries.... There are probably lots of other good ideas out there that I've never even thought of."

A Portland-specific cell phone tax, in particular, seems to hold interest in City Hall. Oregon has historically taxed cell phones at lower rates than other states, and there's some thought that a policy here could raise a lot of money. Plus, it might be something Portland City Council could pass without asking voters.

Whatever emerges, Wheeler suggested today he'll be in the fray.

"I intend to put the resources of my administration fully behind this effort," he said today.

If the city, county, and others are successful in creating the new housing over the next decade, it would represent a 61 percent increase in the city's supportive housing. But it still wouldn't be enough. According to numbers attributed to the New York-based Corporation for Supportive Housing, Portland currently has an unmet need of roughly 2,800 units of supportive housing, and homelessness is on the rise.

## **OPB**

# **Portland Wants To Build 2,000 New Units Of Supportive Housing**

*By Amelia Templeton  
October 18, 2017*

Justin Martinez was young, in ninth grade, when he first experienced homelessness.

That year, he said he started living in a station wagon with his mom, dad and two brothers.

They parked it behind his high school in Truckee, a small town in northern California. "It was a snowy winter. We were hungry, barely keeping warm," Martinez said.

"I flipped out in the car. I started slamming my head against the window. I remember that clear as day."

To calm him, he said his mother handed him a pill with codeine in it. He said during that tough winter in the car, the pills helped him relax.

That was the beginning of his long struggle with addiction.

“Eventually it led to heroin, because that’s the cheapest, strongest opiate,” he said.

Martinez spent the next 17 years living on the streets in Portland. At times, he shoplifted to support his habit, and went in and out of treatment programs and jail.

“It’s been a rough road,” he said. “I could never really get off the streets. I cost the city a lot of money.”

But on Wednesday, Martinez testified before the Portland City Council in support of the solution he says stabilized his life and ended his addiction and homelessness — permanent supportive housing.

It’s subsidized housing linked to services that address the root causes of homelessness, like mental illness and addiction.

In a unanimous vote, the council approved a plan to develop at least 2,000 units of permanent supportive housing by 2028. The plan is currently unfunded.

Multnomah County, which shares responsibility for providing services to homeless people with the city, will vote on a similar resolution Thursday.

The resolution was sponsored by Mayor Ted Wheeler, along with Commissioners Nick Fish and Chloe Eudaly.

“Chronically homeless men and women are the hardest to house, face the greatest barriers, and face the highest risk of dying on our streets,” Fish said. “A roof over their heads is not enough. They also need supportive services.”

The city counted 4,177 people who were living on the street or in cars, in emergency shelters, and in transitional housing during its annual one-night homeless count in 2017.

Fighting tears, Martinez described the interventions that helped him after more than a decade of chronic homelessness.

He said getting diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar schizoaffective disorder, and receiving medication for mental illness helped him understand his drug addiction.

“I realized, once I was given the meds for my mental health, that I was self-medicating all those years,” he said.

Then, he moved into a studio in the Bud Clark Commons, an apartment run by the nonprofit Home Forward that provides housing and a variety of services to homeless men in Portland.

“I used every resource that was available. I kept taking my meds, kept doing the next right thing. I got my driver’s license. I graduated a pre-apprentice program,” he said.

Martinez now works for Home Forward, the nonprofit that helped house him.

“Now I’m a taxpayer, and I would like nothing more than my tax dollars to go toward more housing opportunities, like I got,” he said.

The council based its target of 2,000 new permanent supportive housing units on a need estimate conducted by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a New York research and advocacy nonprofit.

Using Portland’s one-night homelessness count and other data, the group estimated that Multnomah County needs approximately 2,800 units of permanent supportive housing.

CSH estimated the cost of providing those units at \$413 million.

The City Council did not provide an estimate of how much local funding it would take to meet the new goal of 2,000 units by 2028.

“We don’t have a price tag,” Wheeler said. “We’re being completely open-minded. All options are on the table.”

Earlier this year, Portland taxpayers passed a \$258 million bond measure for affordable housing, the first of its kind in Portland.

The bond requires the city to create or acquire at least 1,300 units affordable for people making 60 percent or less of the median income in the metro area.

The council plans to direct most of that funding to build units for families who have low annual income and families of color.

At the request of Commissioner Fish, the council also agreed to fund at least 300 units of permanent supportive housing with the bond.