

The Oregonian

More Police Patrols Planned in Downtown Portland due to Businesses' Public Safety Concerns

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
November 22, 2017*

The city of Portland plans to increase police patrols and put up signs warning against camping in certain areas of downtown Portland to address business owners' concerns about public safety due to homeless people in the area.

The plans were among ideas announced Tuesday during an invite-only meeting at Portland City Hall for downtown business representatives, according to Michael Cox, a spokesman for Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. The meeting included Wheeler, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill, Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury and Marc Jolin, the director of the county's joint office of homeless services.

The purpose of the meeting was to update the business community on homelessness downtown as well as public safety and livability issues, Cox said. The meeting had no notice for the general public and "was not intended to be a press event," he said.

The plans include posting "no camping" signs in areas that have high pedestrian traffic, more police patrolling those areas and more outreach to business owners, Cox said. He did not immediately respond to additional questions about what specific areas would be targeted, how long the increased patrols would last or how many additional officers that would entail.

The meeting comes at the eve of the important holiday shopping season for downtown retailers. And it follows The Oregonian/OregonLive commentary by Tim Boyle, the chief executive officer of Columbia Sportswear, where he revealed his company is considering moving one of their brand headquarters that relocated last November to downtown Portland due to employee safety concerns.

Boyle wrote that employees have been threatened by homeless people camping in the company's doorway, harassed, followed and had property stolen or destroyed.

Where a 'home for everyone' collides with 'not in my neighborhood': Editorial Agenda 2017

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
November 25, 2017*

As progressive as Portlanders like to believe themselves to be, there's no issue like population growth and housing to bring out their inner conservative. As the city's population has surged, established neighborhoods have sought historic designation to guard against change. Homeowners in wealthy enclaves are posting yard signs decrying demolitions. And longtime residents are bemoaning the loss of "neighborhood character" amid the growth.

So it's not surprising that the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is pulled in different directions, trying to calm irked neighbors while laying the groundwork for how the city will absorb new residents. Unfortunately, some of the proposals in the bureau's draft "Residential

Infill Project" - a plan for updating development rules in single-family neighborhoods - lean too heavily on ensuring the comfort of existing homeowners rather than helping create new ones.

Consider one key proposal in the plan that calls for capping the size of new homes built on a typical single-family lot to 2,500 square feet. The limit is designed to mollify neighbors who want to block the building of so-called "McMansions" that have replaced some smaller-scale homes around Portland.

But it could end up making Portland's housing crisis worse than it already is. A city-commissioned report by Johnson Economics warned that the proposed cap would make building in Portland less profitable, thereby discouraging builders and resulting in fewer new units built in Portland than under current laws. Considering that Portland is in a crisis because the housing supply is already tens of thousands of units short, it makes no sense to adopt a cap that would further crimp supply.

Builders don't need any more reasons to pass Portland up -- the city already provides plenty. One is its notoriously slow permitting process, which recently prompted the founder of J.T. Smith Companies to tell the Portland Tribune that his construction company would no longer build in Portland. Or there's the long list of fees that builders must pay to multiple city agencies and other jurisdictions. One recent project involving a 2,077 square-foot home carried \$41,150 in system development charges, excise taxes, inspection fees and other costs, according to the city.

And then there's the fundamental question of whether neighbors' distress over others' property choices should justify allowing the government to manipulate the housing market in the first place. There are multiple factions who lose out if the government chooses to codify the self-interested preferences of residents who believe their slice of Portland should never change.

First, there's future buyers. The 2,500 square-foot cap is lower than the average square footage of homes built in 2013, according to the Johnson report. The decrease also runs counter to market demand for somewhat larger homes, national data show. With fewer builders and fewer homes, buyers will also have limited and more expensive choices. But current owners also lose out. A cap on square footage will also lower land values, the economist's report found. That means those who want to sell their homes or lots may get lower prices.

But other ideas in the Residential Infill Project smartly push options for improving affordability and increasing density. The plan proposes allowing the construction of duplexes and triplexes in neighborhoods with good access to schools, parks and transportation lines. It also proposes rezoning roughly 7,000 "narrow" lots for development - about half the total number in the city. The idea, said project manager Morgan Tracy, is that these lots are close to transportation and other amenities and can support a so-called "skinny house" or other such development at a more affordable price point.

It's a significant proposal, particularly considering the hostility to any narrow-lot development from Commissioner Amanda Fritz who has long opposed construction of skinny houses. With the previous City Council under former Mayor Charlie Hales, Fritz successfully pushed an amendment that would ban any such development on narrow lots. She told The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board last week that she didn't see a reason to revisit the question and that she will again seek to strip out any such proposal.

But Tracy said the bureau felt it important to continue discussion about the challenges and opportunities that these narrow lots provide. The bureau's right and deserves both credit and support for being willing to push forward the issue. Because for as much as people want to blame Portland's housing crisis on greedy landlords or "McMansion" developers or rich California

transplants, the problem boils down to the dispassionate laws of supply and demand. There are far too few homes and apartments in the city at far too few affordable price points for far too many people who need them.

The public has until Nov. 30 to weigh in on the Residential Infill Project, which still faces months more work before going to the City Council for consideration. It's also the perfect time for Portlanders to reflect on how to square their home-for-everyone beliefs with their not-in-my-neighborhood mentality.

The Portland Tribune

Council to Consider Tolling Study to Reduce Congestion

*By Jim Redden
November 26, 2017*

City proposal coincides with state committee looking at tolls on I-5 and I-205 in the city.

Studying whether to impose tolls on state and local roads will be considered by the City Council on Thursday.

No tolls will be immediately imposed, however. The resolution coming before the council directs the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and other jurisdictions to study the issue, and to report back on the results within a year.

According to the resolution, tolling is called "congestion pricing" when the charges increase to reduce traffic at peak hours. The resolution says that might be necessary to reduce growing traffic congestion in the region.

According to the resolution, "between 2013 and 2015, traffic congestion in the Portland region grew over four times faster than the growth in population — population grew by 3.0%, while congestion increased by 13.6%." The increase is damaging livability, hurting the economy, and threatening the council's greenhouse gas reduction goals, the resolution says.

The resolution is one of two efforts that could eventually impose tolls in the Portland region to reduce congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise funds for transportation projects, however. The \$5.3 billion transportation funding package approved by the 2017 Oregon Legislature directed ODOT to study tolling I-5 and I-205 before proceeding with the related freeway projects it authorizes.

The resolution to be considered by the council directs PBOT to work with ODOT on the study. It also directs PBOT to work with counties and cities in the region to study tolling additional roads and other steps to reduce congestion, such as varying parking rates to reduce peak demand.

According to the resolution, cities around the world have adopted congestion pricing policies with good results. The work best when other transportation options such as transit are easily available, however.

And the resolution says that some steps need to be taken to reduce the impact on lower-income households, however. They include "reductions in fees and investments in projects that benefit low-income users."

You can read the resolution at www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/664084.

Congestion pricing is also called "value pricing." You can read a previous Portland Tribune story the first meeting of 's Portland Area Value Pricing Policy Advisory Committee at portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/379123-266022-portland-tolling-committee-begins-work.

Block-Party Permits Boom in Portland's Neighborhoods

*By Lyndsey Hewitt
November 23, 2017*

After the city launched a campaign to boost participation, including removing barriers to access and adding an online payment system, Portland's east side sees more neighborhood parties.

Portland's Bureau of Transportation learned this summer there's still a big demand for block parties. The city-permitted, family-oriented kind, of course.

The bureau conducted a pilot project to boost participation through its Block Party Program over the summer. It focused efforts on underserved and more culturally diverse neighborhoods east of 82nd Avenue plus the Cully neighborhood, which it saw as a desert area for anyone filing for block party permits.

The Office of Neighborhood Involvement's crime prevention division worked with PBOT to figure out why there was so few requests for block parties in those areas. The city then created an online application and payment system, and waived the fees for the pilot area. As a result, there was a boom in permits.

Another barrier to many in East Portland was the literal barrier needed to close off a street.

To get a permit (which costs \$10), one needs six barricades — and it costs about \$50 for those, plus a drive to a traffic-control flagging company to pick them up (and later return them).

Instead the city eliminated the cost of the barricades and placed them in community centers within the pilot area, at organizations including the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), East Portland Neighborhood Office and others.

"I think there's cultural alienation. When we launched this, it was early last year. It was really in the context of what was happening in America," said Kristan Alldrin, the community event coordinator for the Bureau of Transportation. She's referring to the fear in immigrant and refugee communities after the election of President Donald Trump, who vowed more deportations and building a wall between the United States and Mexico. She said city staff were concerned because a lot of people brand new to Portland, including many immigrants, were afraid to come out and use public space, let alone work with government.

"So we were challenged. I think the numbers show that ... in spite of that context, we were successful. We had more people involved," she said.

Indeed, in 40 years of permitting block parties, they had never issued more than 500 permits. This summer they saw 555, with 41 in the pilot area (up from 11 the year before).

Block parties are essentially small-scale street closures where the city issues a permit so neighbors can hold a party in the road during the day.

Anyone can apply for them at any point in the year, but summer is the most popular time. There were about 170 permits filed in September, 10 in October and only one in November.

The idea is to close off local service streets, invite adjacent neighbors and enjoy the space together — promoting neighborly relations. It's been an activity in America since World War I, supposedly when people would rope off streets to sing patriotic songs. New York City block parties are believed to be the birthplace of hip hop music in the 1970s.

"It's just a permit for one day. So you can't do, you know, like a rager. Like Burning Man. There's no alcohol allowed in these streets," Alldrin said. "It's intended for families and to keep it neighborly. Some people rent bouncy houses or put barbecues in the street."

The block party project was a part of a larger Livable Streets strategy, which the City Council recently approved via an initiative called Portland in the Streets.

PBOT had previously "lacked clear policy ... that streets are for people," versus cars, said Rich Eisenhauer, a program manager at PBOT. He said the program will "make it easy, clear, predictable and transparent" in how the public can apply for permits and throw events such as block parties.

The larger strategy focuses on three different areas, including installing more pedestrian plazas, and demonstration projects like Better Naito or Better Broadway, which temporarily reconfigure streets for cyclists and pedestrians. The third area they'll focus on in the Livable Streets program is finding use for underutilized rights of way to create things like mini parks or community orchards. Oh, and everyone's favorite: Little Free Libraries.

Next year, Alldrin hopes to reach more renters to host block parties.

"That's another thing we're learning. A lot of people who live in these neighborhoods are renters and don't realize they have that right," she said. "It's not just meant for people who own houses. It's available for everyone."

Willamette Week

Portland City Council Candidate Was Arrested Four Years Ago for DUII

*By Rachel Monahan
November 24, 2017*

Andrea Valderrama, who is running for Commissioner Dan Saltzman's seat, told police she was the designated driver in a 2013 incident.

At 28, Andrea Valderrama, a mayoral staffer to Mayor Ted Wheeler, will have to prove she's wise beyond her years to win City Council office.

She's been a David Douglas school board member since she was appointed last year. Before the mayor's office, she worked as a staffer to former City Commissioner Steve Novick.

But she also nearly had a record of a different sort.

Early in Valderrama's time working at City Hall, she was arrested for driving under the influence, failing a sobriety test and a breathalyzer test.

She told police officers she was the designated driver for her three friends in the car with her.

Valderrama is running for the seat being vacated by City Commissioner Dan Saltzman next year.

Four years ago, on Friday, Nov. 27, 2013, at 11:17 pm, Valderrama was pulled over for speeding — driving 58 mph in a 35 mph zone on Southeast Grand Avenue, according to a police report obtained by WW.

Valderrama told the police officer that she was the designated driver for the three passengers in the car and repeatedly denied that she had been drinking, according to the police report.

At 12:47 a.m., an hour and a half after being pulled over, she agreed to a Breathalyzer and measured .14 percent blood alcohol content; .08 is the legal limit.

Valderrama, whom the police report says is 5'2" and weighs 115 pounds, ultimately told the cops she'd had two beers with a dinner of steak and fries.

She entered a diversion program for the arrest, though court records and the police report remain available.

Valderrama tells WW it was a one-time mistake, and her driving record show no other arrests.

"While the charge was ultimately dismissed, and I am forever grateful that it did not result in an accident or an injury to anyone, that doesn't change the fact that I made a terrible decision by getting behind the wheel after drinking," she says. "It was a stark lesson learned. I'd never done something like it before, haven't since and never will again."

It remains to be seen whether that failure of judgment will become an issue in the race.

Earlier this month, former mayoral candidate Jefferson Smith was forced out of a job because of concerns about his past behavior. He'd recently accepted the post of leading the Oregon Center for Public Policy, but objections about his record of punching a woman in college ultimately forced him out in the midst of the #MeToo movement.

Some argue there is less tolerance for misconduct more generally in Portland—including Valderrama's four-year-old arrest.

"In a town where Jefferson Smith has been hounded out of office for his past indiscretion, the odds are good she's going to face close scrutiny for it," says Jim Moore, director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University. "People are looking for candidates that don't have some kind of blot on their record."

Oregon Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-East Portland), who has endorsed Valderrama, says that he thinks people will forgive a lapse.

"The mark of a person is how they respond when they make a mistake," he says. "She's shown remorse.... She's taken responsibility."

The Portland Mercury

In Other News

By Mercury Staff
November 22, 2017

Budget Cuts Amid Surging Tax Revenues? Homelessness Officials Prep for Winter.

AS PORTLAND'S GOVERNMENT enjoys record tax revenues, city officials are bracing for cuts. Warning that rising costs for employee pay, pension obligations, and other factors might

outstrip revenues, Mayor Ted Wheeler on Friday asked directors of many city bureaus to sharpen their knives.

In a memo [PDF] offering “budget guidance,” Wheeler told bureaus funded by the city’s general fund to offer up 5 percent cuts. That’s a fairly routine message for mayors to send early in the budget process, but Wheeler is suggesting things will get dicey next year.

“The City Budget Office currently predicts these additional costs could add between \$5 million and \$25 million to the City budget,” the mayor writes. It’s possible some or all of that money will be covered by tax revenues, but the city’s budget staff have been clear: Growth can only last for so long.

In addition to cuts, Wheeler says any request for new, ongoing money should target housing and homelessness, infrastructure maintenance, public safety, livability, and innovation.

WITH LAST WINTER looming large, officials are ramping up cold-weather shelter options for Portland’s growing homeless population.

The county’s Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) this week announced a new shelter near Southwest 5th and Washington. The basement space will house up to 75 homeless men, giving priority to vets, the disabled, and people over 55 years of age.

The existing Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter in Old Town will also add 35 beds for the winter, and officials are putting off the closure of a shelter at Southeast Grand and Stark until winter passes. The seasonal spaces are in addition to hundreds of new shelter beds that have been added in Portland to help alleviate the city’s housing woes.

Earlier this year, freezing temperatures led to several high-profile deaths from exposure among the city’s homeless population. They included David Guyott, a 68-year-old man who died of hypothermia while sitting at a downtown bus stop, and Karen Lee Batts, who had recently been evicted from low-income housing. DVH