

The Oregonian

Portland Police Consider Moving Central Precinct out of Downtown

By Maxine Bernstein

February 1, 2018

Portland police are considering moving Central Precinct out of downtown to a former Army Reserve center in Southwest Portland, which for the first time would leave the city's core without a major uniformed police presence.

The bureau's budget request submitted this week seeks \$1.7 million in one-time funding to renovate the Jerome F. Sears U.S. Army Reserve Center on Southwest Multnomah Boulevard for use as a precinct.

Central Precinct, on the ground floor of the Justice Center, is extremely overcrowded, lacks space for community meetings, is not up to seismic code and affords scarce parking for police vehicles or officers' personal cars, according to the bureau's budget package.

Police supervisors have discussed the idea for at least two years, but for the first time it has been put in writing and publicly disclosed in a budget document with a specific request for funding.

"This is all conceptual," Assistant Chief Chris Davis said Thursday. "We're still talking about a concept. ... What we really want is a facility that meets all of our space needs and more importantly, enhances the services we provide to the community."

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who serves as police commissioner, signed the bureau's budget package submitted to the city this week but declined, through his spokesman, to say whether he supports such a move.

"We are not at the point yet where the mayor is making judgments on specific budget offerings from the bureaus," said spokesman Michael Cox.

Central Precinct is the only of the bureau's three precincts with a front desk that remains open 24 hours, seven days a week, allowing people to walk up and request to speak to an officer or report a crime. The precinct serves downtown and the Southwest and Northwest Portland neighborhoods, a population of about 200,000 residents over 41.3 square miles.

But the precinct's 18,457-square-foot is insufficient, resulting in crowded work spaces and inadequate community rooms, Davis said. In contrast, East Precinct is 35,000 square feet.

The bureau informed the city's Bureau of Internal Business Services of its needs, and the Sears building was recommended.

The bureau, working with a planning consultant, determined the structure would accommodate the precinct's needs, at least temporarily.

"The Jerome Sears building is an interim solution, as the bureau plans to propose the site be used to construct a purpose-built precinct including an emergency response facility," the bureau's budget proposal says.

If the decision is made to relocate the precinct to the former army reserve center, the long-term proposal under consideration is to eventually have a new precinct built at the Southwest Multnomah Boulevard site, Davis said. The assistant chief said he didn't have a cost estimate for that type of project.

The bureau is consider moving the 126 officers assigned to Central Precinct, but not the other police divisions that fill police headquarters on the Justice Center's floors 11 through 16. Those include the chief's office, detectives, internal affairs, records, forensic and fiscal divisions.

Police supervisors and city officials turned to the Sears building, which is located in a residential neighborhood, after they were unable to find other space available downtown.

"That's not necessarily a plus," Davis said of the location. But considering high rents downtown and lack of available space, some tradeoffs must be made, the assistant chief said.

The proposed site allows for quick access to Interstate 5. A precinct in what's largely a residential neighborhood also may give area residents a greater sense of safety, the budget proposal says.

But the current location is crucial, for example, for officers monitoring large-scale marches or demonstrations. For that reason, the bureau proposes maintaining a contact office at the Justice Center, including the current roll call room, report writing area and storage space for police equipment. It's also considering smaller contact offices elsewhere downtown.

"Our patrol officers are out in the community anyway all day," Davis said.

Currently, the Police Bureau pays \$505,344 to lease Central Precinct from the city's Office of Management and Finance, which owns the Justice Center building. That includes an agreement with the Portland Bureau of Transportation for use of several floors of the parking garage across the street.

Renting the Sears building, in contrast, would cost an estimated \$379, 317. The leftover money would go toward renovating the army reserve center.

The city acquired the Sears property in September 2012 from the federal government with the provision that the building primarily be used for emergency management services. From November 2015 through about May 2016, the city set up a temporary women's shelter in the building.

The request to fund renovations for the Sears building is part of the bureau's \$12.3 million spending plan for fiscal year 2018-2019, which also requests 93 new officer positions and replacement of mobile data computers in police cars. The City Council would need to approve any funding.

As requested by the mayor, the police bureau also presented potential areas for cuts in the next budget. Those could include four of nine desk clerk positions, which would end the front desk coverage, available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., at East and North precincts.

If the four desk-clerk jobs are eliminated in next year's budget, the bureau would consider setting up self-service kiosks in the precinct lobbies for online report writing, Davis said.

The last significant change to precincts was made nine years ago. In 2009, the council voted to support then-Chief Rosie Sizer's plan to consolidate precincts from five to three, eliminating patrol operations from Southeast and North precincts.

Portland Police Seize 17 Guns in Crackdown Prompted by January Homicides

*By Eder Campuzano
February 1, 2018*

Portland police seized 17 handguns in late January in a direct response to the five homicide investigations the bureau had opened since the beginning of the year. (A sixth homicide would add to the tally Wednesday evening.)

The gang enforcement team and gun violence task force cracked down on those suspected of gun violence, per Chief Danielle Outlaw, employing the help of at least 15 local and federal law enforcement agencies and community groups, including the Office of Youth Violence Prevention.

Starting Jan. 22, police arrested 18 people on various charges and tracked down 36 more with outstanding warrants in the crackdown, nicknamed Operation Safe Winter.

"Part of this mission was to be proactive in our approach to intercede and attempt to stop further violence at a time of heightened tension and emotion," Outlaw said in a release.

The most recent homicide under investigation by the bureau happened around 8 p.m. Wednesday when an unknown suspect shot and killed Davonte D. Kerney, 22, of Las Vegas in the North Park Blocks of the Pearl District.

Residents of New NE Portland Homeless Camp Await Sweep as Founders File Appeals

*By Eder Campuzano
February 1, 2018*

Steve Kimes and the seven residents of the Village of Hope homeless camp don't know when the police will come to clear them out.

It might be Friday morning. It could be in the afternoon.

And if they're fortunate enough to remain undisturbed through the evening, the site is safe until Monday because cops don't conduct sweeps on the weekends, they say.

But Kimes, a pastor for Anawim Christian Community, has appealed to the city in hopes campers can stay on the plot of land where they say they've removed more than 40 bags of trash and established a low-impact settlement for those who need a bit of stability.

Both Kimes and fellow Village of Hope co-founder Lisa Lake are no strangers to homeless advocacy and outreach. The Gresham pastor was once homeless himself and now operates a shelter on a three-acre plot run by his church.

Lake is the director of Advocacy 5, a nonprofit that funds groups that provide meals, crisis management, basic health care and other services for the homeless. They, along with Right 2 Dream Too co-founder Ibrahim Mubarak, helped found Village of Hope at the behest of folks who have camped in the area for years.

Their endeavor comes as debate rages in the Foster-Powell neighborhood over the site of a 120-bed shelter Multnomah County commissioners agreed to develop last week. Portlanders logged

more than 1,600 complaints against homeless people and campsites each month in 2017, having reached record highs in the year after city officials swept settlements on the Springwater Corridor.

Kimes, Lake, Mubarak and a group of volunteers spent much of the week spreading soft bark dust across paths leading to the Village of Hope site — this one located off Airport Way in Northeast Portland — and building platforms supported by concrete blocks for campers to pitch tents without disturbing the ground below.

"We've been extraordinarily careful in taking care of the land and trying to land softly," he told The Oregonian/OregonLive.

With the increase come some signs of hope, city and county officials say: There are more people sleeping in shelters or transitional housing than outside for the first time since 2005.

Park rangers served exclusion orders to Village of Hope campers Thursday morning. Later in the day, police posted signs warning against trespassing.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler issued a statement saying "rigid structures should not be constructed on public environmentally sensitive lands," several media reported Wednesday. Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees Portland Parks, also wrote in a statement that "parks are for everyone, not open for settlement by particular individuals or groups."

But camp organizers say the city-owned plot they're on, situated on a parcel known as Big Four Corners, is zoned industrial, not park lands.

"As far as the space being for everyone, I don't really understand that," Kimes said. "This isn't an official park. It's a slough area we've built on a hill upon a sliver of fence. We're actually making the place safer."

To them, the calculus is simple: There are at least an estimated 4,177 people without permanent homes living in Multnomah County. The City of Portland has introduced initiatives that would provide services for 2,000.

The Village of Hope site wasn't being used by anyone. So, what's the harm in building a temporary solution for those who have nowhere else to go?

"The city is eventually going to put up more shelter beds," Kimes said. "But there's not going to be enough shelter beds for all of the people who want them."

And aside from demand outpacing the need, Kimes said some folks need more stability than a shelter can offer them. Most places only open their doors at night, leaving patrons on their own during the day.

Portland's officially declared "housing emergency" does not have a clear end in sight.

"Shelters do not offer stability," he said. "There's a lot of drama. There's a lot of rules. There's a lot of tension."

Besides, Lake said, at least three of the camp's managers have lived on and around the site for five to six years already.

"They describe it as their home," she said. "They came to us, their street advocates, and asked us to help them create this movement."

Kimes gets irked when he hears from Portlanders who say they're sympathetic to the plights of those on the streets who don't offer solutions themselves. He said it's time for people who say "somebody needs to be doing something" to pitch in.

"We're doing something. We did something. And I'm frustrated that the city is giving us such a harsh response for us trying to create a solution," he said.

In the meantime, supporters have called for a 10-day protest to protect the camp, urging sympathizers to attend city council meetings and press Wheeler and Fritz to allow Village of Hope's seven residents to remain.

Portland Adopts Rules to Contain Lead and Asbestos in Home Demolitions

By Molly Harbarger

February 2, 2018

Portland instituted its first crackdown on lead paint and asbestos emissions from home demolitions Thursday.

The city council voted unanimously to require developers who plan to tear down homes to more thoroughly search for lead paint and asbestos, to notify nearby neighbors and to undergo at least two city inspections to ensure the company follows its own toxics containment plan.

The new rules, which are effective immediately under an emergency clause but might not be implemented until July 1, follow guidelines set by the state.

A pair of Portland lawmakers, Sen. Michael Dembrow and Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, sponsored a bill in the 2017 legislative session that gave cities more power to regulate lead in demolitions and significantly expanded their authority to regulate asbestos. Both materials are common in homes built before the 1980s.

A 2015 investigation by the Oregonian/OregonLive found that only about a third of Portland homes built during that era had asbestos removed before a demolition. The state's standards to handle asbestos were the weakest in the country.

Weak regulatory oversight has allowed contractors to tear down hundreds of homes in Portland without properly removing asbestos inside, an investigation by The Oregonian/OregonLive has found.

The newspaper's investigation estimated that in 2012 and 2012 alone, 200 homes in Portland gave off hazardous asbestos fibers when they were demolished so bigger homes or apartments could be built in their place. Lead paint is even more ubiquitous in older homes.

Breathing airborne asbestos fibers can cause cancer. Breathing lead particles can lead to brain damage.

Dembrow and Keny-Guyer attended Thursday's council meeting to applaud the city's new rules.

"I see a real model for the rest of the state," Dembrow said. "If the city of Portland can do this right, I can certainly see other cities taking this up and taking this on because their residents are equally concerned."

Portland's Bureau of Development Services will oversee the new program. All buildings that house one to four families and are at least 200 square feet -- including accessory dwelling units -- will be under the new rules.

With the rule in place, anyone who wants to demolish a home or duplex must provide an asbestos survey to the city before a permit is issued. The council raised the cost of those permits

by \$180 to help pay for two new city inspectors who will be required to visit a demolition site before, during and after the house is torn down.

Nancy Thorington, code and policy analyst for the bureau, estimated that at least 700 demolitions each year will fall under the new rules.

The inspectors will make sure demolition companies create a plan that accounts for dust control, that they remove all painted parts on the exterior of a building beforehand and that they wet down all materials that might have lead or asbestos to keep dust contained.

Studies suggest that people within 300 feet of a demolition could experience noticeably higher levels of lead dust, so anyone living in that zone must be notified in advance with a sign on their door.

"This ordinance is very important so other kids don't get sick and get developmentally disabled," said 11-year-old Ramona Runkel during public testimony, who was treated as an 8-month-old because of elevated lead levels in her blood.

The Portland Tribune

City Council Makes Demolitions Safer for Lead Exposure

By Steve Law

February 1, 2018

Crews must carefully remove all painted exterior siding before tearing down a home in the city.

Crews doing home demolitions in Portland must take serious steps to avoid lead dust and asbestos from spreading to the neighborhood, under a tough new ordinance adopted unanimously Thursday by the Portland City Council.

The city ordinance, which will take effect on or before July 1, would require workers to remove all painted exterior siding before demolishing a home, to reduce the chance that lead dust will get into the air, among other required actions. The city will require a mandatory inspection of each demolition site before a home may be torn down, so a city inspector can assure the demolition plan will meet terms of the new ordinance.

Two additional city inspectors will be hired by the Bureau of Development Services to carry out the inspections.

To fund the increased staff, the city will boost demolition permit fees by \$180.

Public health experts say there is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for children who are more susceptible to developmental disabilities.

The ordinance was pushed by City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the Bureau of Development Services.

In response to requests from United Neighborhoods for Reform, the council agreed to extend the notification of upcoming demolitions to neighbors living within 300 feet of the projects.

One of the people testifying Thursday was Ramona Runkel, the 11-year-old daughter of Eudaly's chief of staff Marshall Runkel.

Ramona Runkel said lead in her blood tested at an elevated level when she was eight years old, but her parents took steps to remove the leaded paint hazards that caused it, so her blood eventually tested fine.

"This ordinance is very important so other kids don't get sick and get developmentally disabled," Ramona Runkel testified to the City Council, while sitting next to her dad, who helped champion the ordinance within City Hall.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Inclusionary Housing Rules May Soon Affect Condo Projects

*By Chuck Slothower
February 1, 2018*

Tiffany Sweitzer has built in Portland more than 2,000 housing units, including the luxury Cosmopolitan condos in the Pearl District.

But now Sweitzer's development company, Hoyt Street Properties, will not build more condos in Portland's Central City, she said, unless changes are made to the city's inclusionary housing program.

"With the latest inclusionary zoning constraints, we will probably sell our remaining land or build office (space) instead," she said.

A year after inclusionary housing rules took effect, they are being reviewed by the Portland Housing Bureau. The rules for condos are the first part of a comprehensive reassessment of inclusionary housing, which took effect Feb. 1, 2017.

"We'll look at what changes are needed to make sure the inclusionary housing program is effective, because the more units that are built, the more inclusionary units we get," said Matthew Tschabold, policy and equity manager for the Housing Bureau.

Mayor Ted Wheeler has made building affordable housing a priority during his administration to address Portland's self-declared housing crisis. In December, he shook up the Housing Bureau, replacing Director Kurt Creager with Shannon Callahan, a city policy analyst who is serving as interim director.

The inclusionary housing program has dramatically affected the multifamily pipeline. Developers rushed to submit applications for projects before the effective date, putting 19,000 units into the pipeline. But the amount of work for architects who design multifamily projects has since dwindled.

Among rental proposals, 23 projects totaling 1,083 units have moved into the permitting process. Of those, 730 units come from the private sector, with the Housing Bureau responsible for the rest.

The flow of condo projects has already slowed to a trickle. Since Feb. 1, 2017, only one application for a condo project – totaling 15 units – has been submitted for land-use approval, according to the Housing Bureau.

The condo rule changes are expected to take effect March 20. Prior to that, the Housing Bureau will take public comment at a Feb. 21 staff hearing.

The draft changes outlined by the Housing Bureau set restrictions on the resale of inclusionary housing condos. The bureau is given first right of refusal on purchasing units. Refinancing is tied to the restricted resale value of a unit set by the Housing Bureau.

Other rules require condos be maintained as a primary residence, be purchased by a first-time homebuyer and not be operated for purposes such as vacation rentals. Cash purchases of inclusionary housing condos would be barred. And units must be maintained under affordability rules even if they are converted from condos to apartments or vice versa.

Taken together, the rules would spook lenders, making financing for condominium projects difficult, Sweitzer said.

“It looks like condo construction is stopped in its tracks – and it will be with us,” she said. “We will be done under rules like these with building condos.”

Sweitzer said she was disappointed she was not asked to weigh in on the draft rules.

“I’ve built over 2,000 housing units, and I have not talked to the city of Portland, the Housing Bureau or anyone else working on the rules, which is just incredible,” she said.

The draft rules revisions allow for more flexibility, Tschabold said. For example, if a condo owner is unable to sell for 12 months within the program guidelines, the income restrictions on sales would be loosened. A buyer with 100 percent of Portland’s median family income could purchase a condo set aside for buyers at 60 percent of median family income, and a buyer with 120 percent of median family income could purchase a unit set aside for buyers at 80 percent of median family income.

“We’ll do whatever we can to help facilitate linking a buyer and seller,” Tschabold said.

Even after inclusionary housing rules took effect, the Housing Bureau permitted approximately 5,000 units – about the annual average in recent years, Tschabold said.

A forthcoming report from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability analyzing inclusionary housing’s first year is expected to add fuel to the debate.

The Housing Bureau has been working with Oregon LOCUS, a trade group for developers, to devise incentives for developers who applied before inclusionary housing rules took effect to opt into providing affordable units. Mike Kingsella, executive director of Oregon LOCUS, did not return messages seeking comment.

The incentives will look similar to the Housing Bureau’s old Multiple-Unit Limited Tax Exemption (MULTE) program, Tschabold said, offering tax breaks in return for affordable units.

OPB

Fritz: Open Spaces Could Help Portland Expand Its Building Potential

*By Ericka Cruz Guevarra
February 1, 2018*

Portland City Council will spend the next few weeks deliberating changes and additions to its Central City Plan, which outlines city growth plans and policies over the next 20 years. City Council will vote on the amendments March 7.

Among the items the plan tackles is development. Though, development has taken on different meanings for different populations in the city. The broader question as city commissioners finalize a plan is: How does Portland manage growth in a way that benefits everyone?

“There’s a feeling from some members in the community — community advocates and union advocates as well — that the city needs to do more work on establishing mechanisms for public benefits that come out of large-scale developments,” said Claire Adamsick, senior policy adviser for Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz. “Essentially, the city lacks policies that attain mutual private and public benefit from development projects.”

A recent report from the Portland Business Alliance found the Portland metro area is growing in population and employment, but that housing development is not keeping pace. Housing affordability, according to the report, remains the city’s biggest challenge and continues to threaten growth. Many have blamed it for the city’s growing homelessness population.

Fritz, who oversees the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, is proposing a change to the Central City Plan that she says could help balance the scale between development needs and public benefits. She’s found an unlikely ally to do so: open spaces.

The idea, however, is not to build on open spaces. Instead, Fritz wants to expand the reach of an existing tool that allows developers to transfer unused potential from one development to another.

Buildings in the city center have size limits — a maximum square footage known as Floor Area Ratio (FAR). FAR works a lot like building blocks; the more you have, the more you can build. For developers, building more takes money, but it also means more potential revenue.

Developers can gain additional FAR in two ways: first, by contributing community benefits, most notably by building affordable housing units or paying into an affordable housing fund. If developers want more FAR, they can then get what is known as “transfer FAR.” Developments in residential, commercial and employment zones can get transfer FAR by buying it in a transfer from one development to another.

Open space zones, however, are currently not allowed to take part in transfers, and an unknown amount of building potential — and money — is essentially sitting unused. Under Fritz’s proposal, open space zones would enter the FAR transfer market, a small amendment that Fritz says will increase building potential in downtown Portland.

“Knowing that the whole Central City Plan process is designed to put density where it’s appropriate, to make use of current infrastructure like light rail and the parks that we have downtown, and support people both living and working in proximity and where they can get to the central city on transit, it’s got multiple benefits to encouraging development in the central city.”

Money from FAR transfers from open spaces downtown could also theoretically mean money for the parks. Fritz says FAR transfers can be used to tack on community benefits that could address concerns over the cost of growth in Portland. She says her office is working with community groups to determine how to strike that balance.

For example, Fritz says FAR transfers from open spaces will ensure those spaces are preserved. When a development gives up its FAR, it gives up its ability to develop further.

“Once you’ve sold the development potential, you can’t then turn around and develop the space that you’ve sold it from,” Fritz said. “So to me, it’s another way of making sure our park property remain an open space.”

Growing Pains

Despite the pressing need for more housing, developers have long said there aren't enough incentives to build in Portland, a complaint Fritz says she's aware of.

To compound this, developers add there's a growing gap between the cost of construction and what the average renter can afford.

"The sooner we build new housing, the sooner it will depreciate in value, and the sooner it will become more affordable," said Eric Cress, founder of the company Urban Development Partners.

"It's like the old Chinese proverb: The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago; the second-best time to plant a tree is now. The same holds true with the city's housing infrastructure," he said.

It's unclear just how much development potential is sitting in open parks and spaces. But supporters of the Fritz amendment say any addition to development potential could help make a dent in alleviating the city's housing shortage.

"I think we are some suffering some serious growing pains in our city, and I don't think it's unique to Portland," says Felisa Hagins, political director of Service Employees International Local 49.

"The question about heights, the question about size — all of those are very intertwined into the fundamental question about what's the future of our city?"

Hagins says the union wants to see Portland continue to grow. But she's also keeping an eye out for vulnerable populations who are often left behind by that growth.

Hagins says the SEIU sees Fritz's plan as an opportunity to gain benefits for the service employees who would work in the buildings being developed.

For example, SEIU wants to make it so that developers can gain additional FAR by guaranteeing that the people who work in the buildings as janitors or security guards make 40 percent of median family income.

"Our union isn't anti-development. We want to see our city continue to grow and be more successful, we want to see more commercial office space," Hagins said. "But it is that question of how do you have both those things intertwined?"

Portland Requires Contractors To Protect Neighbors From Lead Paint

*By Amelia Templeton
February 1, 2018*

Portland City Council closed a major loophole in regulations protecting children from exposure to lead in paint.

In a unanimous decision Thursday, the council voted to require crews to limit the spread of lead dust and asbestos when they demolish homes built before 1978.

Lead-based paint in homes is the leading cause of lead poisoning in the nation.

Remodeling an old home can trigger federal requirements to prevent exposure to lead paint.

But until the council's vote, similar rules did not apply when homes were demolished.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly introduced the ordinance. It adopts a number of best practices for lead-based paint that were developed by the Oregon Health Authority and the Department of Environmental Quality.

“Lead poisoning is 100 percent preventable,” Eudaly said. “That’s why I proposed this policy work at [Bureau of Development Services], and that’s why I’m bringing it forward today.”

Most significantly, the city’s new ordinance requires contractors to remove exterior siding and other painted materials before they demolish an old home.

It also requires contractors to develop a plan to control dust and debris and to notify neighbors on properties within 300 feet of the demolition site. It also prohibits mechanical demolition activities when the wind is blowing more than 25 mph.

The rules apply to residential homes, duplexes and structures of up to four dwelling units. They also apply to demolition of accessory structures like garages and outbuildings more than 200 square feet.

In the last 15 years, about 1,300 Portland homes have been demolished, most of which likely contained lead paint.

As construction in Portland boomed and the pace of demolitions picked up, residents began to demand better protection from the clouds of contaminated dust that can drift onto neighboring properties.

While Portland has chosen to curb possible lead exposure to neighbors during home demolitions, the regulatory loopholes remain in other Oregon cities.

Last year, the Oregon Legislature passed SB 871, a law that gives cities the authority to regulate lead paint during home demolitions. Lawmakers also directed state agencies to develop a set of best practices to limit lead and asbestos debris during demolition.

The Legislature stopped short of adopting a statewide requirement that contractors mitigate lead dust because some cities feared being stuck with an unfunded mandate.

“I see a real model for the rest of the state. If the city of Portland can do this right, I can see other cities taking this up and taking this on,” said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, who spoke in favor of the ordinance.

Portland is hiring two new inspectors who will be dedicated to the program. The Bureau of Development Services will fund those positions by adding \$180 to the cost of a demolition permit.