

The Oregonian

The Harder They Fall

By Steve Duin

March 9, 2018

On so many issues, the opinion piece is a slam dunk. The cruelty or sell-out is obvious. The negligence is malicious. I can't wait to choose sides.

This isn't one of those columns.

One of the main reasons Portland is so vulnerable to a catastrophic earthquake is that at least 1,600 buildings in the city have no steel reinforcements in their walls.

These monuments of unreinforced masonry include Voodoo Doughnut, Jake's Grill, the otherwise Cheerful Tortoise, the University Club, and more than 80 churches and schools.

When the ground begins to shake, they are potential death traps, especially the multi-story buildings where the floor joists are not secured to the walls. The earth only needs to move several inches for those floors to detach and plummet.

"What happens in a violent earthquake is the floors all pancake," says Walt McMonies, a real-estate lawyer at Lane Powell. "(A stack of) pancakes with squished people and personal possessions in between."

By the Bureau of Emergency Management's count, Portland has more unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs) than any city on the West Coast.

In April, City Council will consider mandatory seismic refits for those buildings, with construction completed some time in the next 25 years.

On the basis of public safety, this mandate would seem a no-brainer, especially in gathering spots like Keller Auditorium, Union Station, Crystal Ballroom and the city's schools.

Yet seismic refits are perilously expensive. How do small-business owners pay for them in the 90-year-old buildings along Hawthorne Boulevard or in St. Johns and Multnomah Village?

Given that the URMs include 7,000 residential units, where do we find rooms for the displaced in the frantic local housing market while apartment complexes are brought up to speed?

And if our fair city is so fired up about the dangers of unreinforced masonry, why has it never bothered to refit two prominent entries on its URM registry, the Matt Dishman and Mt. Scott Park community centers?

Pippa Arend is one of the co-founders of p:ear, a nonprofit that mentors homeless youth downtown. She also owns the 12-unit Weist Apartments on Northwest 23rd.

"I feel uniquely in the crosshairs" of the mandate, Arend says, "being an advocate for homelessness, owning a building, and being an artist who cares about artists' housing and space."

The Weist, a three-story Colonial Revival, was built in 1905. Arend used an inheritance from her grandparents to buy the building for \$1.1 million in 1994, and lives on the top floor.

Complying with current city code - which requires bracing the parapets and attaching the walls to a re-sheathed roof - would cost \$175,000, Arend estimates: "I can write that into the business plan. I can afford it."

But if the city also demands that she bolt floors to wall, Arend told the council, "My building will be effectively totaled."

Demolished long before the quake strikes.

"The mandate is draconian, an over-reach," Arend says. "Even if there's a 30-year timeline, I can't raise the money - \$1 million plus - and I couldn't afford the debt load.

"I'm fighting for my home and my retirement. And if I'm damaged, it's not just me, but my kids at p.ear."

McMonies has a different take. He owns three URMs, including the Trinity Place Apartments, parked several blocks east of The Weist. He initiated a seismic upgrade of that 36-unit complex in 2009, inspired by the fearsome cost of earthquake insurance and the looming mandate.

"I'm the owner who has actually done this, and I was able to do it without putting myself into bankruptcy," McMonies says.

His cost? \$1.1 million. "We managed to do what opponents think is impossible, which is to retrofit the building with people in place. We did it incrementally, out of cash flow."

But McMonies acknowledges the "relatively low cost" - \$25 per square foot - is "deceptive." Because the building's floors did not require strengthening, he didn't need to demolish partitioning or pay relocation costs for his tenants.

Had that been necessary, McMonies estimates the seismic refit at Trinity Place would have cost at least \$3 million.

Therein is the Council's dilemma. Safety for the people who live in these buildings, or walk in their shadow, is paramount ... but the bill for seismic retrofits is often prohibitive. Ask Oregon legislators, who decided they couldn't afford the \$337 million "quake-proofing" of the state Capitol.

The Bureau of Emergency Management wants Council to mandate bolting walls to floors for the 1,332 Class 3 buildings on the URM list.

Jonna Papaefthimiou, a bureau planning manager, noted, however, "We don't expect to move this forward without financial support for property owners."

The source of that financing? Property tax exemptions? Another round of urban renewal? The infrastructure czar in the White House? No one knows. Nor is anyone sure who will champion this mandate on the Council, now that Steve Novick and Charlie Hales are gone.

Arend and McMonies, to be sure, will remain in the thick of the contentious City Hall debate. "As long as they give me a bulletproof vest, I'm happy to testify," McMonies says. "That and the witness protection program."

Reading, Writing, Evicted: Let's Talk About What's Next

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
March 9, 2018*

The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board will host a conversation with community members, school leaders and city officials next week diving into the recent, three-day series "Reading, Writing, Evicted." Reporter Bethany Barnes' project highlighted how the region's housing crisis is taking a toll on not only on children who must regularly move with their families in search of

affordable housing, but also on the teachers and students in classrooms hit by their mid-school-year moves.

The panel, which will include Barnes, will discuss what officials can do to ease the harmful effects on high-churn schools in neighborhoods with concentrations of low-income families and children of color. We'll also explore what role city officials can play to ease this increasing burden on schools.

Want to be on the conversation? Volunteer to be selected as part of a small studio audience by emailing lgunderson@oregonian.com.

Or, participate online through the The Oregonian's Facebook Live event at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 14.

Read the full series [here](#) and watch for an editorial on the project in Sunday's Opinion pages.

In Housing Puzzle, Tracking Rentals is Critical Piece: Editorial

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
March 10, 2018*

It's easy to focus on how Portland's housing crisis is hurting adults. We hear regularly how they can't find affordable first homes. They struggle to secure reasonable rents close-in, settling for lengthy commutes or multiple jobs to pay the bills. They end up couch-surfing, living in cars or on the street.

But in The Oregonian/OregonLive's recent series, "Reading, Writing, Evicted," we were shown in vivid, heartbreaking detail how Portland's ongoing housing emergency is scarring the next generation of Oregonians. Through stories, graphics and video, reporter Bethany Barnes described the trauma for the increasing number of students transferring in and out of Portland schools midyear. But they're not the only casualties. She found the constant state of flux also detracts from the learning of those classmates they leave behind.

Barnes found a 1996 study that showed how students who switch schools often fall behind their classmates by several months, leaving them more likely to drop out. The research also determined that in schools where more children come and go, the average academic achievement for all students can be as much as one grade level lower.

That's especially disturbing considering that schools with more constant churn predominately serve poor and minority families in Portland Public Schools, a district with an already shameful record of providing an equitable education for all students.

Take Cesar Chavez K-8 in North Portland, where Ordella Reynolds teaches fourth grade. She's lost six students and gained seven new ones since the fall. As Barnes reported, Reynolds finds that students living with the specter of regular transitions may be shy, sad or scared about their next move. Those students may need more of her help to catch up and may disrupt the class when they feel frustrated or mad that they're behind.

There is some hope, however. Barnes highlighted work in one school district in Austin, Texas. There, officials aim to break these cycles by using a computer program to link families who need housing with options that fall within their school's boundaries. That way students don't lose academic gains they've made. They don't lose the teachers and other school staff who invested in

their progress and care about their futures. And they don't lose the friends who can provide the support and stability that makes showing up at school every morning that much more appealing.

A private business owner and former school board member created the program in Austin. But public agencies should be able to provide this type of solution. In fact, some already do. Officials in many cities, from small (nearby Gresham) to large (Los Angeles), track commercial rental units - in some cases with helpful inspection data that determines whether they're actually habitable.

Unfortunately, the City of Portland lacks such a fundamental tool. It's unbelievable, really, considering city leaders have made annual declarations since 2015 that we're in a "housing emergency." We know we don't have enough housing, but we also don't know exactly how much we have.

Past Portland housing leaders have called for such a rental inventory, but it's never been created. Numerous city memos outline explicit plans to implement a rental registration. It's never happened.

While Mayor Ted Wheeler campaigned on the need for a rental registry, there remains a disturbing lack of urgency in the work to get it up and going. Interim Portland Housing Bureau Director Shannon Callahan confirms the registry is a relatively simple set-up, as far as city tech projects go. That being said, a "beta" version with basic information - units and addresses - won't be ready to test in-house until June.

In the meantime, members of the new rental services commission will discuss what kind of information should be included in the database. Callahan said she's hoping to bring the full project to the council for a vote by the summer or fall.

And all the while, the students come and go.

Portland leaders should speed up this process. They should approve the registry as soon as possible and roll it out with the critical information first: rental units' addresses, size and approximate cost. It's critical that such a registry also identify which school district the unit is within and, specifically, which elementary, middle and high schools tenants would attend.

City councilors can and should vote to add more data points later. Indeed, information from random inspections would surely be helpful in the future. But now, Portland's leaders must move quickly to create a tool that could help bring some small amount of stability to families and children in need.

We've got a long way to go before Portland will have a roof for everyone. But we can more easily provide a consistent, safe and supportive place for children to learn. For some kids, that may be the next best thing to home.

The Portland Tribune

Council to Consider Raising Arts Tax Administrative Limit

*By Jim Redden
March 12, 2018*

Increasing the household income to be exempt from the annual \$35-a-year payment will also be considered by the council on Wednesday.

The City Council will consider eliminating the maximum 5 percent administrative limit for administering the Arts Tax on Wednesday.

The council will also be considering raising the income threshold of those who do not have to pay the annual \$35 tax from the poverty level to twice the poverty level.

The 5 percent administrative limit was included in the measure approved by Portland voters at the November 2012 election to help fund arts education and arts institutions. It is administered by the Portland Revenue Division, whose costs have exceeded 8 percent over the past five years, however.

The resolution to be considered Wednesday says the limit is preventing the bureau from maximizing the collection of the tax. It proposes the council review the administration of the tax during the annual budget cycle.

The resolution also says that increasing the threshold for being exempt from paying the tax will make it more equitable.

Despite the administrative problems, Art Tax collections have increased over the past five years, growing from \$7.9 million in 2012 to \$9.6 million in 2016. Nearly one-quarter of Portlanders are still not voluntarily paying it, however.

You can read the resolution at www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/676248.

The Portland Mercury

The City of Portland Is Giving Away Fat Sacks (of Grant Money to Past Cannabis Offenders)

By Josh Jardine

March 9, 2018

The City of Portland is done bogarting the tax revenue raised from recreational sales of cannabis, and will now begin doling out a portion of the 20 percent tax you pay when grabbing a pre-roll, fat sack, edible, or vape cartridge.

This coming Monday, March 12, the City of Portland Grants Office will hold their one and only informational meeting for potential record clearing and workforce development grant applicants, from noon to 1:30 pm at Portland City Hall (1221 SW 4th), on the second floor in the Pettygrove Room. The deadline for submitting your organization's application is March 30, 2018, so get on this.

The city will be giving over \$350,000 in tax revenue "to address record clearing and workforce development opportunities for individuals disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition." This is a great development—a corrective measure and gesture toward amnesty for those who have suffered from cannabis-related drug laws that are no longer in effect in Oregon. From the press release:

Funding may be awarded in the following areas:

- Record Clearing: Undo direct harm to those disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition by removing barriers to housing, employment, and education through legal support including but not limited to expungement, fine reduction, and charge reduction.

- **Workforce Development:** Create pathways for people disproportionately impacted by previous cannabis laws to obtain family-wage jobs, including, but not limited to, training, mentorship, and other workforce reentry support.

In addition to \$350,000 in tax money for record clearing and workforce development efforts, \$150,000 will be allocated to grants toward cannabis industry-specific support and technical assistance to businesses. This is a separate funding track that will be managed by Prosper Portland.

Again, all applications must be submitted by Friday, March 30, 2018. There's more information [here](#), including a direct contact for specific questions.

Surprise! The Portland Business Alliance Still Hates the Better Naito Bike Project!

*By Steven Humphrey
March 9, 2018*

The city's Better Naito Project—which devotes one lane of traffic on Naito from the Hawthorne bridge to the Steel for the busiest bike and pedestrian season—is objectively GREAT. And yet? The Portland Business Alliance remains obstinately opposed to the project, even though city analysis has proven that the bike/pedestrian lane causes only a nominal effect on traffic in the area. From the Oregonian:

"We continue to be concerned about the impacts of Better Naito," said Marion Haynes, the Portland Business Alliance's vice president of external affairs. "And as we've evaluated some of the data that's been presented, we find that it lacks the type of thorough analysis that we would hope would occur on this project and others throughout the city."

The Oregonian also analyzed traffic in the area while the Better Naito project was in action, and came to roughly the same conclusion as the city's analysis. And yet the PBA still wants more studies, even though the costs would exceed that of the Better Naito project. Again, from the O:

"All of this analysis has consistently shown less than two minutes of delay for northbound drivers when Better Naito is in season," Dylan Rivera, transportation spokesman, said in an email.

You may remember our reporting last year which documented the PBA's hissy-fit about Better Naito, in which they wrote dramatic, whining letters to city commissioners, and attempted a heavily slanted public letter writing campaign to drum up commuter anger against the project—WHICH BACKFIRED HILARIOUSLY.

If you've been following the Mercury's reporting for the last 15 years, you'll know the PBA has a detailed history of trying to influence our government to the detriment of its citizens—you may remember their most recent attempt to ostracize the homeless in concert with Tim Boyle of Columbia Sportswear and Mayor Ted Wheeler, which thanks to some very shady backroom deals, was largely successful.

And while disparaging the less fortunate in our community may further their own greedy interests, the constant harping on the Better Naito project is an example of the PBA shooting themselves in the foot. One of the reasons Better Naito exists is to encourage more biking and walking—but it also encourages tourism and keeps our city's visitors safe while they attend the extremely popular summer Waterfront festivals. Apparently the Portland Business Alliance has

forgotten that tourists (particularly those who remain alive for the entirety of their stay) spend a LOT of money at downtown businesses.

If history is any indication, the PBA will continue to attempt to shut the Better Naito project down. You can help shut them down by emailing the PBA to voice your concerns, or show your support for Better Naito by emailing Transportation Bureau Commissioner Dan Saltzman.

We'll be keeping our eye on this situation as it develops.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Three Left in Running to be Broadway Corridor Master Developer

*By Chuck Slothower
March 9, 2018*

Two Denver-based developers and a partnership with local ties were named Friday to a short list of candidates to be master developer of the 32-acre Broadway Corridor area in Northwest Portland.

The companies are Continuum Partners, based in Denver; McWhinney, also a Denver firm; and a third team of Related Cos., based in New York City, in partnership with two Portland entities, Melvin Mark and Central City Concern.

The developers were culled from nine responses to a request for qualifications that Prosper Portland issued in November. The agency will host a public forum on March 21 to hear presentations from the developers.

Prosper Portland sought to evaluate the firms' experience in completing projects of similar scope, said Shawn Uhlman, spokesman for the agency.

"Everybody involved, the committee, was pleased with how thoughtful the responses were," he said.

Developers may choose to add local partners as the process advances, Uhlman said.

"It's still to be determined for each team," he said.

The short list did not include Kaven + Co., a Portland firm that proposed a 970-foot-tall twin-tower skyscraper, although it's possible the local company could emerge as a partner to one of the larger firms.

Agency staff members are tentatively scheduled to recommend a development team to the Board of Commissioners at a May 9 meeting. A memorandum of understanding between the developer and agency would follow, and later, a development agreement.

The master developer will work with ZGF Architects to design a thorough redevelopment of the Broadway Corridor, including the 13.5-acre U.S. Postal Service site.

The city's Broadway Corridor Framework Plan, published last year, envisions 3.8 million square feet of development along with parks, open space and transportation infrastructure. The plan calls for building nearly 2.1 million square feet of residential space, including a large amount of affordable housing.

In October, the City Council agreed to increase allowable building heights in the Broadway Corridor to 450 feet north of Northwest Johnson Street and 250 feet south of it.