

## **The Oregonian**

### **Taller Building Height Limit Weighed on Old Town Parking Lot Site**

*By Elliot Njus  
March 22, 2018*

The Portland City Council is considering whether to allow a building up to 200 feet tall on a vacant block in Old Town Chinatown that's currently a surface parking lot.

Mayor Ted Wheeler had proposed to raise the height on the block — bounded by Northwest Davis and Couch streets and Fourth and Fifth avenues — to 160 feet on its west half and 125 on its east half.

The owner of the lot, Guardian Real Estate Services, on Thursday asked the council to go even further, raising the allowable height to 200 feet on the west side of the site. Company President Tom Brenneke said a housing development isn't feasible with lower height limits and said the parcel is profitable as a parking lot — and by implication could stay that way for a while.

Previous development proposals for the site, including an Uwajimaya Asian grocery store, foundered under the existing 100-foot height limit.

Members of the city's Historic Landmarks Commission, which would eventually weigh in on the design of any building on the site, said they opposed raising the height limits because it could erode the integrity of the 10-block New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1989.

"We all want to see development on a surface parking lot, especially in a historic district," said Kristen Minor, vice chair of the commission. "This has really been a blight, and we would like to see it filled. The height amendment, though it is reduced on the half block, is still out of scale with the historic contributing buildings."

The Old Town Chinatown Community Association supported the 200-foot height if it led to a development that includes affordable and median-priced housing, saying it was convinced redevelopment wouldn't be possible at lower heights, said Chair Helen Ying.

"At this time, the way Chinatown and Japantown is, even my own children have a hard time wanting to come into the area," Ying said. "That does not help to pay respect to the community. We need to find a way to make this area thrive and be economically viable for the Chinese business there."

The council will revisit the issue at 2 p.m. on April 4.

### **Ted Wheeler Aide Fired for Improper Use of Mayor's Car**

*By Gordon Friedman  
March 22, 2018*

Mayor Ted Wheeler's office has fired senior policy adviser Nathan Howard over his use of Wheeler's city-owned car, three City Hall officials said Thursday.

Howard had recently driven home in Wheeler's city-owned white Ford C-Max hybrid, but was dishonest about where he went with it when asked last week, said the officials, who knew about the firing but weren't authorized to speak on the record about it.

Howard said he was chauffeuring Wheeler to and from events the evening of March 13 when he drove the mayor's city car home because he wasn't feeling well. Howard, 28, said he returned the car the next morning. City rules generally forbid employees from using city cars "for any purpose except official city business."

Michael Cox, Wheeler's deputy chief of staff, confirmed that Howard no longer works for the mayor. Cox declined to elaborate.

Howard said he "made a bad judgement call" by taking the mayor's car home and regrets failing to come clean about it right away. He also said he believes it was not right for the mayor's office "to unceremoniously fire me for this infraction."

Still, Howard said he is grateful to have had the opportunity to work for Wheeler. "I'm a huge believer in the city of Portland and public service and I know this mayor has what it takes to improve the lives of Portlanders," Howard said.

Before becoming one of Wheeler's five senior policy advisors, Howard played an integral role in Wheeler's ascendancy to the mayor's office as his deputy campaign manager. Howard and his brother, Aaron Howard, also co-founded and own Cave Junction-based marijuana farm East Fork Agriculture LLC., which operates under the name East Fork Cultivars, and a business called East Fork Hemp LLC.

Howard's ouster may open a rift between Wheeler and Portland's most liberal residents, some of whom saw Howard as a positive influence on the mayor's policymaking.

Margot Black, an organizer with Portland Tenants United, said Howard's firing "leaves a huge vacuum" in the mayor's office that can't be easily filled. She said Howard was one of the few who could "hold the mayor and the staff in that office accountable to campaign promises," particularly on issues of affordable housing.

Other locals aired their outrage on Twitter.

Voting rights advocate Henry Kraemer tweeted that Howard "was perhaps progressives' best friend" in Wheeler's office, adding, "I expect many Portlanders will miss (Howard's) presence there, whether they all know it or not." Local social justice activist Cameron Whitten tweeted, "A loss for the city."

As news of Howard's departure spread, Portland's Resistance co-founder Gregory McKelvey tweeted, "Say it ain't so!" Howard replied, "I wish it wasn't."

Howard posted The Oregonian/OregonLive story on his firing to his Facebook page Thursday afternoon, saying the situation is ironic given his dislike of cars and driving. Katrina Maley Wheeler, who is married to the mayor, commented, "This was not an easy decision. I know they tried to make it work. You're missed, I can tell you that."

# Portland City Council Reverses Itself, Votes for Taller Buildings at RiverPlace

*By Elliot Njus  
March 22, 2018*

The Portland City Council reversed itself Thursday, voting to advance a proposal for buildings up to 325 feet tall in the downtown waterfront district known as RiverPlace.

Towers built to that height would be as tall as the tallest buildings in the South Waterfront district. To reach it, however, the developer would have to earn a number of "bonuses" offered by the city in exchange for including affordable housing and other elements.

The development firm that owns the site has privately pushed an ambitious plan for towers that would include more than 2,000 apartments, and they circulated a concept by superstar architect Kengo Kuma that was first reported by Willamette Week.

Because any housing project would be subject to a 2017 city mandate that developers include rent-restricted units in any new housing, it would add hundreds of affordable apartments.

But that plan, while tempting in a city with a housing shortage, isn't a sure thing under the proposed zoning that also allows commercial uses, such as offices. To maintain some control over what goes on the site, the council also voted to require a master plan before any future development.

Commissioner Chole Eudaly had cast the deciding vote against increasing the height limits in February, joining Commissioner Amanda Fritz in voting no. She said she initially shared concerns about a proposal for tall buildings next to the river, which was discouraged under previous city plans, and for the eleventh-hour introduction of the issue.

The "no" vote drew considerable attention in part because Eudaly ran for her seat on a platform that centered on housing affordability, for which increasing the housing supply is key.

But she asked the council to reconsider on Thursday, this time joining with Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish in voting yes. (Commissioner Dan Saltzman abstained because his family owns property in the district.) She said she was no longer swayed by the step-down policy.

"It was really intended to preserve view of mostly commercial buildings," she said. "I have to say, I don't think our past policies of the past 30 years have resulted in a vibrant waterfront. It's a dead one."

Fritz, who voted against the taller height limits, said she was disappointed the council was "spot zoning" on a single site.

"This is against our adopted central city plan policy of step down to the river, which was discussed at huge length. It's abhorrent," Fritz said. "This benefits one property owner at the detriment of everyone else."

The owner of the affected property is NBP Capital, an investment firm led by siblings Lauren Noecker Robert and Spencer Noecker and backed by billionaire investor Nicolas Berggruen. It's been amassing property in RiverPlace over the last several years.

It acquired the RiverPlace Athletic Club in 2014, then evicted the operator of the gym in 2015 for failing to pay rent. It bought neighboring low- and mid-rise apartment complexes later that year, bringing its holdings to nearly 10 acres included in the redevelopment concept.

## The Portland Tribune

# Council Reverses Vote, Approves RiverPlace Height Increase

*By Jim Redden  
March 23, 2018*

**Commissioner Chloe Eudaly casts the deciding vote to encourage controversial downtown redevelopment plan.**

A controversial downtown redevelopment project moved a step forward when the City Council tentatively agreed to substantially raise maximum allowable building height in the RiverPlace area along the west side of the Willamette River on Thursday.

The increase from 75 to 325 feet was requested by NBP Capital for an apartment complex that would include nearly 2,000 new apartments, including about 500 that would be affordable to households earning 80 percent of the area's median family income.

The council also voted to require the developer to prepare and submit a master plan for the project before it is formally submitted for approval.

The project is opposed by nearby residents and others in the recently-formed South Downtown Neighborhood Development Coalition. They argue the towers would create a wall along the river and block views of it that the city has protected in the past. The project will require the demolition of the failed RiverPlace Athletic Club and the relatively low Douglas Place apartments and townhomes. All are owned by NBP Capital on the 10-acre site that would be redeveloped.

"This would forever change the face of the river. If the City Council approves it, other developers will seek the same thing," says Phil Gilbertson, a downtown resident who helped form the new group.

The project is also controversial because it was introduced late in the council's ongoing process to update the Central City Plan that guides growth in the urban core. Before the project was presented to the council, the appointed Planning and Sustainability Commission had already recommended an update that only raised the RiverPlace height to 200 feet. Critics, including prominent developer John Russell, accused NBP Capital of intentionally bypassing the commission's public involvement process. The commission advises the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, which is doing the technical work on the update.

"That's outrageous. That's not how proper planning is supposed to work," says Russell, whose company owns the 200 Market Building near the RiverPlace area.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly cast the deciding vote. Two weeks ago, she joined Commissioner Amanda Fritz in voting against the height increase, which was proposed by Mayor Ted Wheeler and supported by Commissioner Nick Fish. It died on a 2-to-2 tie, with Commissioner Dan Saltzman recusing himself because his family owns property in the area.

But Eudaly agreed to reconsider the proposed height increase after learning more about the project. Among other things, she wanted more assurances the affordable housing units will actually be built. The requirement for a master plan is intended to provide such assurances, in addition to creating of form of the public process that BNP Capital missed. If the apartments are

built, a certain percent of their units must be affordable under the Inclusionary Housing policy that took effect on Feb. 1, 2017.

Eudaly also disagreed with Fritz that requiring building height to "step-down" near the river was a useful goal.

"I don't think our past policies of the last 30 years have resulted in a vibrant waterfront," Eudaly said.

The RiverPlace height increase is one of several the council has approved in the downtown area to encourage more redevelop projects, including apartment towers to help house the tens of thousands of additional people expected to be living in Portland by 2035. The council previously voted to increase the maximum building heights in the Broadway Corridor at the west end of the Broadway Bridge a maximum of 400 feet on the northern portion. It has also voted to increase heights at the west end of the Morrison Bridge. And it will consider raising them to 200 feet on a block in the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood on April 4.

In addition, on Wednesday the council approved a proposal by Wheeler to give a property tax break to developers who include affordable units in apartment projects submitted for development before the Inclusionary Housing policy took effect. Projects with around 1,900 units were submitted for approval before the deadline. Wheeler said waiving around \$100,000 in taxes per unit over 10 years could encourage more than 300 affordable units in those projects.

The Central City Plan update is intended to be the first amendment to the Comprehensive Plan update approved by the council last year. The council is expected to approve it later this year.

## **Willamette Week**

# **Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly Reverses Her Vote and Says Yes to Height for a Possible Kengo Kuma Skyscraper Project**

*By Rachel Monahan  
March 22, 2018*

**Council voted down the proposal on March 7. With a 3-1 vote, Riverplace is given height.**

Portland City Council today approved a plan to raise the maximum height for construction along the Willamette River, clearing the way for the possibility of skyscrapers designed by renowned Japanese architect Kengo Kuma.

The 3-1 vote comes two weeks after the council rejected the project, sparking uproar and frustration.

Once again, City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly cast the decisive vote.

Eudaly changed her vote to "yes" after what she described as "digging in" with city planning staff on the question of whether Portland should continue its policy related to having a gradual decrease in building heights closer to the Willamette River.

City Commissioners City Commissioners

Commissioner Amanda Fritz voted against the height increase of up to 325 feet at Riverplace, in part by citing that principle. Commissioner Dan Saltzman again recused himself because of property his family owns nearby.

But Eudaly responded to that argument directly.

"The step-down sounds like a noble tenet," she said. "It was intended to preserve views of mostly commercial buildings from the Bus Mall forward. I don't think our past policies of the last 30 years have resulted in a vibrant waterfront."

Part of the way developer NBP Capital tried to convince City Hall to raise heights was by presenting the possibility of up to 500 units of affordable housing through the city's inclusionary housing program.

The council is requiring the development to go through what's called a master planning process to give the planning bureau and the City Council more say on what gets developed at the site.

Today's vote was technically an amendment to the Central City plan. The larger plan will not be voted on till later this spring.

## **Portland City Hall Might Turn to Voters to Fix Publicly Funded Campaigns**

*By Rachel Monahan  
March 22, 2018*

**After bypassing voters to start the program, Commissioner Dan Saltzman floats the idea of a charter change that would place the office of Open and Accountable Elections in the auditor's office.**

At a budget hearing last week, City Commissioner Dan Saltzman raised the possibility of asking voters to move the city's program for publicly funded election campaigns to the Auditor's Office.

He's pushing the idea over the objections of Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who championed the program and wants to get it running—as well as Auditor Mary Hull Caballero.

The auditor's office was responsible for a previous incarnation of publicly financed campaigns.

Abuse of the system helped end the program and has contributed to Hull Caballero's reluctance to take it on.

At the hearing, Hull Caballero objected to the conflicts of interest involved in overseeing such a program as an elected official.

She also questioned, as she has in the past, whether City Council's policy would work, including whether the staffing level of two people for the program is sufficient, given that there will be an intense workload during election years and lighter workload in the off-years.

"I'm not up to task of doing right by that program based on the policy that you all adopted," she said.

Fritz stepped into an exchange between Saltzman and the auditor to try to shield the auditor from the questioning. Fritz, who championed the return of publicly funded elections, wants to ensure the office gets up and running.

"The auditor has made it very clear she doesn't want to have it," said Fritz. "I want the program to be set up by someone who does have it, so that's why I've volunteered to do it. I don't think it's fair to put the auditor on the spot."

A charter amendment approved by voters may be the only means Saltzman has to compel the auditor to take on the new program.

"That's what I'm thinking to work up—a charter amendment," said Saltzman, while continuing his questioning.

Outside the auditor's office, the responsibility for overseeing the program was a bit of an orphan. Because Fritz oversaw the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, she proposed to place it there.

But when ONI became Eudaly's responsibility, she moved to make the Open and Accountable Elections a separate program that will rotate through Council offices.

Only commissioners who are not up for election will be eligible to oversee it, as WW reported back in December.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Faced With an Affordable Housing 'Crisis', City Increases Developer Incentives**

*By Alex Zielinski*

*March 22, 2018*

With hopes of improving Portland's brand-new affordable housing policy, Portland City Council has begrudgingly agreed to woo developers with... its original affordable housing policy.

"[It's] an imperfect tool. And it's not even my favorite tool," said Commissioner Nick Fish before yesterday's vote. "But... I think in a crisis we should be opportunistic."

That tool, dubbed the Multiple-Unit Limited Tax Exemption (MULTE), would incentivize residential developers to lease 20 percent of their apartments to low-income renters.

The decision comes at the end of the city's year-long slog to create and retain affordable housing after passing its "Inclusionary Housing" (IH) policy—a program that requires any new apartment building with 20 or more units to lease a chunk of those units below market rate. (Psst...it's still not very "affordable"). But, instead of spurring a wave of affordable new housing across the city, the policy has nearly ground residential construction to a halt. Hence the "crisis" Fish mentions.

Months before the IH policy went into effect on February 1, 2017, developers wanting to avoid the onerous rule submitted building permits for no less than 19,000 units across the city. Since then? Only 12 buildings (containing a total of 682 units) have applied for new permits from the city's Bureau of Development Services. In the past, the city fielded permits for between 3,000 to 6,000 new units a year—making 2017's numbers look even more lackluster.

This dramatic drop in permits isn't unexpected—developers who offer lower rents make less money. The same goes for construction staff, contractors, building managers, and other workers. While the new IH policy comes with a few incentives like tax breaks and waived parking requirements, they clearly haven't been enough to get developers to bite.

Enter MULTE, the older city policy that was replaced by the IH program last year, which essentially turned MULTE's optional incentive program into a requirement. Mayor Ted Wheeler has since suggested the city offer MULTE to the specific developers who rushed to submit building permits before IH went into effect in February 2017.

MULTE is only a temporary attempt to create affordable housing, according to the city, and it's not going to replace the shiny new IH plan. The council hopes this band-aid solution (or, what Wheeler called a "reach back into the pipeline") will convince those developers to make a slice of their thousands of projected units affordable.

"This will not solve the housing crisis," Wheeler said before the vote. "But if we want affordability built now, the best place is to look at those projects that are... ready to actually be built, and have some of those units, which could come on as soon as a year from now, be affordable."

Before voting in favor of the decision, Commissioner Dan Saltzman warned developers: This isn't a retreat.

"Inclusionary housing is... a bedrock of developing residential housing in Portland. It's not going to change, and it has to be accepted by the development community as much as complying with a fire code or a building code is," he said. "These are things that are not debatable."

Comissioner Amanda Fritz was hesitant to support the additional tax break, since the "affordable" units remain out of reach for a majority of Portland's lower-income residents. Fritz left the dais instead of voting yesterday, not wanting to entirely derail the program.

The MULTE tax break still needs the Multnomah County Commission's approval to take effect—a vote that remains up in the air. It's also unclear if developers actually plan on taking the city or county up on the MULTE offer. But at this point, it appears the city doesn't have many other options.

In the words of Fish: "We think someone's going to take advantage of this... we hope so."