

The Portland Tribune

Report: Rezoning Portland Will Increase Housing, Lower Rents

*By Jim Redden
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An economic report released Thursday moves the Residential Infill Project closer to City Council consideration.

A rezoning plan working its way towards the City Council would result in almost twice as many new homes being built in Portland over the next 20 years, according to an economic report released Thursday.

The new homes would also be far less expensive to rent because they would be much smaller, mostly multifamily units, says the report prepared by Portland-based Johnson Economics.

The Residential Infill Project recommendations are currently being considered by the Planning and Sustainability Commission. It will be briefed on the report on Tuesday, Dec. 11, by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, which is planning the project.

In recent months, the commission moved to substantially increase the recommended portion of existing single-family neighborhoods to be rezoned for smaller multifamily projects, like duplexes, triplexes and four-plexes.

The commission originally considered recommending that 60 percent of single-family neighborhoods be rezoned. It has now raised that 96 percent, or almost all of them.

The commission always wants to encourage developers to build multifamily projects by increasing the maximum size of the structures. Single-family homes would be limited to 2,500 square feet but increased to 3,500 for a triplex or four-plex.

The changes would result in 38,115 new homes being built over the next two decades. That compares to 13,665 new homes under the city's current zoning, the report says.

"You would expect high rates of redevelopment" with the changes, says economist Jerry Johnson, the author of the report.

According to the report, under the city's existing zoning, the majority of new homes built over the next 20 years would be single-families houses that would rent for an average of \$4,159 a month. If the council approves the recommendations, the majority would be duplexes, triplexes and four-plexes, with the average rent being \$1,823 per unit.

"The impact on rental residential pricing was highly significant, with average rents dropping by 56% as compared to the default scenario (current zoning), which reflects a change in unit size as opposed to reduced rents per square foot," the report says.

The numbers do not include the larger multifamily projects expected to be built along major transportation corridors and in designated urban centers including downtown.

After the Dec. 11 briefing, the commission will then hold a work session on the current version of the recommendations for the project — commonly referred to as RIP — on Feb. 12 of next year. It is then expected to vote to approve and send the recommendations to the council on March 12, setting up a series of council sessions and final vote on them over the summer.

The recommendations are controversial because they would rezone 96 percent of Portland's existing single-family neighborhoods to allow up to four multifamily units on most lots. Supporters say the change will encourage the construction of a greater and more affordable range of housing throughout the city. Opponents say the rezoning will change the character of the city's neighborhoods and encourage more existing homes to be demolished and replaced.

"It is no surprise that by allowing more units on a single lot, we can lower prices per home. Right now, the only type of housing allowed in 43 percent of the city is the most expensive: a single-family detached home with mandatory space for a car. This latest recommendation will allow for smaller, more flexible, and less-expensive housing options, making it possible for all kinds of Portlanders to live in neighborhoods that are close to schools, jobs, parks, transit, and all the things that we love about our city," said Madeline Kovacs, coordinator of Portland for Everyone, a project of the 1000 Friends of Oregon land use watchdog organization.

But the release of the report also prompted a flurry of critical emails between members of the Land use Committee of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association. The association is challenging the inclusion of a "missing middle" housing policy that supports the rezoning in Portland's most recent comprehensive land use plan at the Oregon Court of Appeals.

The Johnson Economics report predicts a relatively small increase in demolitions if the rezoning happens — from 1,384 to 1,501 over the next 20 years. But the net increase of 24,333 units is much greater because so many multifamily projects will replace them.

Almost all of the new units will be rentals, not owner-occupied homes, however. According to the report, few developers are building condominiums anymore because of liability and insurance issues, which are national concerns.

You can learn more about the project at www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/67728.

Willamette Week

Even After City Council Unanimously Approves New Unarmed Police Hires, the Union Is Still “Frustrated”

*By Katie Shepherd
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Portland Police Association president Daryl Turner suggested the city take "a long look in the mirror" before criticizing the union.

Portland City Council unanimously approved Mayor Ted Wheeler's proposal to create 12 new, unarmed officers within the Portland Police Bureau Dec. 5, but the council's debate over the roles left the police union sour.

The unanimous vote to hire 12 new officers—all represented by the Portland Police Association—could be counted as a victory for the mayor's office and the police union. But the tenor of discussion at City Hall left the union president "frustrated."

Portland Police Association President Daryl Turner snapped back at city officials who criticized the delay in implementing the program, which was originally funded in June 2017 but will now miss a Jan. 1 deadline set in the 2018-19 city budget. Meanwhile, Commissioner-elect Jo Ann Hardesty said the new officers shouldn't be represented by the police union, and Turner felt other officials had signaled their agreement with her.

"I am frustrated that this City Council has lost its focus. I'm frustrated at the lack of results for our community," Turner wrote in a press release on Dec. 6. "Jumping on the anti-police bandwagon is easy, perhaps even lazy, but it does nothing to fix the general livability issues that plague our city."

Turner rejected suggestions from City Hall that the police union had delayed negotiations over the new classification. Instead, he laid out a timeline that suggests the city was slow to come to the bargaining table.

"If city officials are looking for an explanation for the delays, perhaps a long look in the mirror is in order," Turner wrote.

The comments come a day after all four city commissioners joined the mayor in approving the Public Safety Support Specialists, or PS3s. The Portland Police Bureau will begin background checks for the first hires into the program in January.

During council discussion, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly pressed city officials on whether they had sufficiently consulted the public and community stakeholders when crafting the PS3 job description. Nicole Grant, a senior policy advisor and police liaison in the mayor's office, began to suggest that Wheeler's team could have done more to reach out. Wheeler cut her short.

"I profoundly disagree," he said. He suggested he campaigned on creating positions like the PS3 officers. The mayor promised to hire unarmed community service officers in the 2017-18 budget after cutting the popular Mounted Patrol to finance the pilot program.

Later in Wednesday's council meeting, Wheeler apologized for interrupting Grant.

Wheeler's office has been quarreling for weeks with the union over what the unarmed officers can do—and how autonomous they'll be.

During the City Council hearing, the mayor's office pushed back hard on the suggestion that PS3s would man front desks, which was one example Turner gave WW in an interview about the proposed positions. Turner also suggested the officers would wait for tow trucks at non-injury accidents and perform other support services.

The mayor's office later clarified that the PS3s would be able to do more than administrative tasks, including potentially walking patrol beats alone or with sworn police officers.

A spokesman for the Portland Police Bureau confirmed that PS3s could be directed to interact with the community by walking a beat, but said the "specific circumstances and frequency will be determined at a later time."

The Portland Observer

A Dent on Homelessness

December 6, 2018

Non-profit opens complex for 153 households

People are coming together to solve Portland's housing crisis. Central City Concern, Portland's non-profit serving people impacted by homelessness, poverty and addictions since 1979, has opened Hazel Heights, the first of three buildings in the Housing is Health initiative—a pioneering commitment from local hospitals and health systems in supportive, affordable housing.

Dr. Rachel Solotaroff, Central City Concern president and chief executive officer, welcomed more than 100 attendees to the Nov. 27 grand opening celebration in Hazel Heights' courtyard.

Before he cut the ceremonial ribbon, formerly homeless resident Jerrod Murray, a single dad with three kids, said, "I am truly grateful that my kids don't have to go through what I went through." He expressed his gratitude that several Native-American families will live in the community by singing an honor song in his native language, Ojibwa.

Hazel Heights, located at Southeast Stark Street at 126th Avenue, will welcome people exiting transitional housing programs who have gained employment and seek a permanent home, but still may have barriers to housing.

The two four-story buildings contain 153 homes total: 92 one-bedroom and 61 two-bedroom apartments. Rents will range from \$412–\$995 per month, depending on median family income.

"These homes are important for supporting employed people with affordable housing. When people are housed, they have a better chance for a healthy future," said Solotaroff.

Hazel Heights' major contributors include the Housing is Health coalition of six health organizations: Adventist Health Portland, CareOregon, Kaiser Permanente Northwest, Legacy Health, OHSU and Providence Health & Services Oregon. Other major funders are Umpqua Bank, Portland Housing Bureau, US Bank Community Development Corporation, Oregon Housing and Community Services, Federal Home Loan Bank and PGE.

The total cost for the project was \$26.8 million. The other two buildings in the Housing is Health collaborative, Charlotte B. Rutherford Place and Blackburn Center, will open this month and in July, respectively.