

The Oregonian

Portland City Council OKs Less Oversight of Spending

By Gordon Friedman

April 12, 2019

The Portland City Council on Wednesday approved new rules that will reduce transparency in city contracting.

Commissioners green-lighted the changes without hard evidence to show the city had actually saved time and money during a trial of less public accountability.

The Council launched a pilot project in 2017 to study whether the chief procurement officer should have more authority to approve contracts worth up to \$1 million for goods and services contracts and \$500,000 for professional services, rather than require the City Council to sign off.

Before the pilot, the Council had to approve goods and services contracts worth more than \$500,000 and professional services contracts costing \$100,000 or more.

At the time the pilot was created, the Council passed an ordinance requiring the chief procurement officer to provide a report at the end of the trial phase “containing anecdotal as well as statistical information” about contracts during the project.

The report was to be presented to the City Council, the ordinance said, and “will be the basis” for either making the changes permanent or maintaining the status quo requiring approvals during weekly City Council meetings.

Contract issues can be more closely monitored by the public during Council meetings, when officials are typically informed about a project’s scope, the bids received and potential for cost overruns.

On Wednesday, the chief procurement officer, Lester Spitler, did not provide the City Council with a report.

Instead, Spitler read several figures showing the number of contracts awarded to women- and minority-owned businesses during the pilot project. He also told the mayor and commissioners that increasing his authority would align the city with the policies of Multnomah County, TriMet and Metro.

Spitler provided no statistical information to show the pilot “has reduced contract processing times and increased cost savings,” as is claimed in the ordinance adopted Wednesday.

Council members raised no qualms about approving the changes despite the lack of statistics showing the changes have made a difference. The vote was 4-0 with Commissioner Chloe Eudaly absent.

“This has definitely been a very productive trial over the last year and a half,” Mayor Ted Wheeler said before casting his vote Wednesday.

Wheeler said increasing the chief procurement officer’s authority during the pilot “definitely got more of our projects moving.” No information to support that conclusion was presented at the Council meeting Wednesday.

Spitler told The Oregonian/OregonLive he never intended to produce a report filled with statistics to justify the changes to his authority.

Spitler, who started in his position one year ago, said he “inherited” the pilot program from the prior procurement manager and “wasn’t familiar with exactly what is intended for the report that was promised.”

Asked for evidence the new procurement officer powers reduced processing times, Spitler said contracts that previously needed Council sign off were no longer “going to Council, and thus the process is more efficient.”

Asked about taxpayer money saved during the pilot, Spitler said there had been “soft cost savings in employee time.”

Portland Protester Who Lost Lawsuit Says Police Treat Activists Like ‘Terrorists’

*By Aimee Green
April 12, 2019*

Protester Margaret “Peggy” Zebroski said a jury’s finding Friday that an officer who broke her nose didn’t commit battery against her will do nothing to encourage what she sees as needed change in how Portland police interact with demonstrators.

“We’re living at a time of attacks on freedom from all sides,” Zebroski said after the verdict, her voice at times wavering with emotion. “Are we -- those who protest these attacks -- terrorists who should be violently crushed by faceless giants in riot gear? Portland Police Bureau has a history of treating peaceful protests as terrorism.”

The ACLU of Oregon said the decision was a loss for the public’s right to peacefully protest without police interference.

“Portland police must end its disproportionate response to protests, commit to using safe and effective de-escalation tactics and respect the basic human rights of all people,” said Mat dos Santos, legal director of ACLU of Oregon. “We demand better from our police. We demand better from our city.”

Police declined comment, but one of the bureau’s assistant chiefs testified during the trial that officers have a deliberate strategy to try to keep the peace at protests and have learned from past experience to quell disorderly scenes quickly. Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler didn’t respond with comment to a request by The Oregonian/OregonLive, and their staffs deferred comment to the city attorney.

Zebroski’s lawsuit was the first of seven protest lawsuits filed in 2017 and 2018 to go to trial, according to the ACLU, which is backing the suits. Among plaintiffs in the suits are protesters who claim police used excessive force by striking one with a baton or blasting another with pepper spray. A federal class-action lawsuit, claiming police improperly used a technique called “kettling” to herd and detain protesters, also is working its way through the court system.

City Attorney Tracy Reeve said in an email that city officials “sincerely regret the unintended injury” to Zebroski.

“We regularly evaluate our policies and training with input from the community, including the ACLU, to see where we can make improvements and we will continue to do so,” Reeve wrote.

Reeve also thanked jurors. “We are grateful that the jury carefully considered the evidence and found in favor of the City,” Reeve wrote.

The jury found 9-3 that Officer Adi Ramic and other officers hadn't intentionally harmed or caused offensive contact with Zebroski when she suffered a broken nose during an arrest Feb. 20, 2017. Ramic pulled the 117-pound, 5-foot-1 woman from a sidewalk and onto the street facedown. He knelt on her shoulder and face, as seen in video played for jurors.

The city said Ramic had probable cause to arrest Zebroski, who a moment earlier had been blocking traffic in the street and had, he thought, tried to pull away another protester from police. Zebroski said she hadn't tried to impede police. The officer had described it as a "chaotic" scene.

Zebroski was among a group of 40 or more demonstrators protesting the shooting death of African American teenager Quanice Hayes by Portland police 11 days earlier.

In explaining the bureau's decisions during protests, Ryan Lee, the assistant police chief of operations, testified that more than 60 officers and support staff were called to the Feb. 20 Quanice Hayes and "Not My Presidents Day" protest because demonstrators didn't have a permit and police didn't know the group's intentions or its ultimate size.

Zebroski's attorneys criticized police in riot gear for suddenly pulling up on an SUV with running boards and then charging into the crowd of protesters, which by then had almost entirely heeded repeated orders by officers to step onto the sidewalk from the street. Zebroski's attorneys and trial witnesses said protesters were peaceful and hadn't resorted to any violence when police began yanking several back out to the street and handcuffing them.

Lee said police will arrest defiant protesters who disperse into a larger crowd because that might not be the end to their unruly conduct.

The Police Bureau used to take a different approach than it does today, Lee said, but that changed based on its experiences with thousands of protesters in the nights after Donald Trump was elected president in November 2016. Lee said instead of protesters calming over time, some grew violent.

"There was a tone of unlawful conduct that continued to cascade until eventually we saw large scale obstruction occurring in certain areas of the city of Portland, violence toward the officers ... violence ... toward others," Lee said.

He said police now are more likely to consider acting swiftly.

"By setting a tone of conduct and expectation to adhere to the law ... we're helping to curtail things from getting worse," Lee said. "We're also helping to curtail the continuation of that activity."

Zebroski was asking for \$200,000 in damages: \$1,224 for medical bills and the rest for her pain and suffering. Her attorneys, from the law firm Tonkon Torp, took on the case pro bono, according to the ACLU.

Zebroski said she'd planned to donate any jury award to Don't Shoot Portland, a group that began in August 2014 after a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, fatally shot an unarmed African American teenager named Michael Brown.

"The Portland police have many faces," Zebroski said. "If you're well-to-do, you see them as protectors. If you're poor, houseless, in a mental health crisis or a person of color, they're a constant threat. If you challenge authority by action in the street -- even with non-violent protest -- they respond with masked and armed violence. A dazzling array of less-than-lethal weaponry designed to engender fear and cause pain."

Earlier, after the judge had announced the jury's verdict and the courtroom had mostly cleared, Zebroski and Ramic briefly spoke and gave each other a hug.

Zebroski later recounted the conversation, saying Ramic apologized to her directly and she told him her concerns were mainly with police command staff. She said the two agreed to go out for coffee.

After 5 Years With No Suicides from Vista Bridge, Portland is Considering Permanent Barriers

By David Stabler

April 13, 2019

The fences on Vista Bridge may not be pretty, but the 9-foot suicide-prevention barriers have been effective at stopping suicides on Portland's "Suicide Bridge." Since the fences went up in 2013, no one has died jumping from the historic bridge spanning a canyon in Southwest Portland.

Prior to the fences, in the years 2008-12, an average of two people a year jumped to their deaths from the bridge, which got its unfortunate nickname soon after it was built in 1926.

"I feel very good about the fact no one has jumped from the bridge in over five years," said Steve Novick, who as the city commissioner in charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation in 2013, the year five people jumped to their deaths from the Vista Bridge, found the money for the barriers. "I wish we could have done something more aesthetically pleasing, but I absolutely think it was the right decision."

David Westbrook of Lines for Life, a regional, nonprofit crisis line for substance abuse and suicide, agrees with Novick. "They're a lifesaving intervention," he said. "There should be a permanent barrier in place. The fence was quick and relatively inexpensive, but there are other barriers that could work, like a net."

The temporary fences, which cost \$236,000, were intended to stay for five years. The transportation bureau is currently applying to the Oregon Department of Transportation for \$7 million to build permanent barriers, said John Brady, a spokesman for the bureau. A decision is expected this month.

Effectiveness hasn't made the fences on Vista Bridge popular with some neighbors.

"I hate them," said Bill Failing, an activist and past president of the Oregon Historical Society who has lived near the bridge for 30 years. "You've got an iconic landmark in Portland, a spot where more photos are taken of the city and Mount Hood, and it's completely ruined. This takes the vista out of Vista Avenue."

Failing belongs to Friends of Vista Bridge, a group that hopes to sway Portland city commissioners to put up nets instead of fences, he said. A member of the group, Denise Archer, contacted Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the Portland Bureau of Transportation, without response, Failing said. Eudaly also did not respond to a request to comment for this story.

A spokesperson for Portland police had no comment about the fences on the bridge.

On a recent sunny day, William Greenebaum walked across the bridge with his son-in-law, Nick Schwartz.

“I think they’re effective, but they’re not aesthetically pleasing,” Greenebaum said of the fences. Schwartz hates to see used needles and broken glass caught behind the fences, along with dead leaves, garbage and bits of plastic, he said.

“It’s too bad,” Greenebaum said. “I think they put up the fences too quickly.”

Bud Clark, former mayor of Portland, likes having the fences. Clark, 87, whose father and grandfather both died by suicide, had a view of the bridge from his previous residence. He said he’d like to see a permanent, decorative fence appropriate to the bridge’s style.

“However, do not take down the (current) fence until a replacement has been designed, approved and funded,” he said.

Vista Bridge is on the National Register of Historic Places, so the city must notify the State Historic Preservation Office of any alteration to the bridge’s appearance. But the preservation office can’t prevent the city from “pursuing whatever option they choose to be in the best interest of the public,” said Ian Johnson, associate deputy state historic preservation officer.

“They can do what they like,” Johnson said. “We don’t have to say it’s a great design. It’s their bridge, their responsibility.”

No work between the city and the preservation office has occurred regarding the Vista Bridge since the temporary fences went up, Johnson said.

Brady, of the city’s transportation bureau, said a replacement hasn’t been finalized. “If we were to get funding, we would then start a public process to get feedback about the design,” he said.

Portland’s 11 Willamette River bridges also draw suicides. But the Vista Bridge, with its sweeping views of the city and Mount Hood, was the leader for people jumping from any Portland land bridge, a police spokesman said before the fences went up.

Back then, Bonnie Kahn and her husband, Kenneth E. Kahn II, used to work below Vista Bridge, and they saw several suicides from their office windows. They felt called on to address the problem, so they organized volunteers to walk the bridge and talk to anyone who looked distressed. They also helped raise money for the fences on Vista Bridge.

Bonnie Kahn, who also helped arrange for a fence on the Fremont Bridge in 2016, would like to see suicide prevention barriers on any new bridge or rehabilitation of an existing bridge, she said. And on parking garages downtown.

“We’re great enough as a society to realize this is a major problem and needs to be addressed in the design,” she said.

Research shows that fences or nets are the most effective impediment to bridge suicides. The Empire State Building, Eiffel Tower and Sydney Harbor Bridge were suicide magnets before barriers went up. Afterwards, the number of jumpers declined to a handful or even to zero.

In 2018, workers began installing stainless steel mesh nets along both sides of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge, the second most popular suicide spot in the world. The \$200 million project is expected to be completed in 2021. Bridge officials hope the mere existence of nets will act as a deterrent.

Research also shows that if people are prevented from killing themselves at one location, they rarely attempt suicide somewhere else.

Said Westbrook of Lines for Life, "It has been shown over and over that, if we can prevent someone from making an attempt at a critical moment in their life when things seem too painful, too bleak to go on, we can prevent them from ever dying by suicide."

The Portland Tribune

Mayor's Rebuke Draws Accusations of Double Standards

*By Zane Sparling
April 12, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler upbraided after Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty questions Jessica Greenlee.

A heated debate at the Portland City Council last week left one speaker in tears, spurring a rebuke from the mayor over disrespectful behavior and subsequent accusations of racial double-standards from the community.

It all began during a Wednesday, April 3, hearing regarding a rental ordinance proposed by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, which would affect how landlords pick tenants and manage their units.

The council meeting had stretched into its third hour of testimony from a panel of five experts when Hardesty began to question Jessica Greenlee, an analyst for Affinity Property Management who sits on the city's rental services commission.

Greenlee argued that the 33-page draft of the public policy was "not fully baked" and too confusing for mom-and-pop landlords. She said the rules might drive up the cost of housing and pushed back on provisions for prospective tenants lacking government ID.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty responded by saying that many community members don't have official ID. She offered, as a hypothetical example, her father, whom Hardesty said lacks a birth certificate because he was born a long time ago in a hospital that burned down.

"If he just happened to be out there trying to get housing, I would like to know how you would help him get housing?" Hardesty asked.

"But don't you think that responsibility lies in the public sector?" Greenlee responded. "You're trying to ask somebody who may only own one or two housing units to make determinations that are much more complex."

Hardesty replied that Greenlee wasn't answering her question. "It was a real straight forward question — it didn't need all that gray area," she said.

Greenlee began to audibly cry and soon left the dais.

She apologized for the emotional display to a reporter from Oregon Public Broadcasting, saying she felt anxious speaking in public and didn't want to come back to the testimony table.

Portland Mayor Wheeler interjected after the incident. "I don't care if people are for this or if they are against it," he said. "People here deserve to be treated with respect."

Hardesty, who sits next to the mayor on the dais, began to lean away from Wheeler.

That's when the accusations of race-related double standards began. Hardesty is African American.

The Urban League of Portland contends that Wheeler stepped out of bounds, saying his response "illustrates yet another double standard to which Black people are held even in progressive Portland."

"I know that part of the job is asking questions and engaging in discourse with Portlanders," wrote U.S. Congressman Earl Blumenauer, whose nine-year tenure on City Council ended in 1996. "From my vantage point, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty was doing her job and doing it well."

In their statement, the Urban League pointed out that Wheeler didn't make similar calls for civility the next day, when several members of the public let loose tirades about Hardesty's behavior.

The league also said Commissioner Eudaly, who is white, also asked tough questions, but was treated differently.

In a statement, mayoral spokeswoman Eileen Park said Wheeler "acknowledges the criticism" and "will continue to consider race and gender dynamics" while managing meetings.

"He will also continue to enforce the rules of order and decorum so that the public, city staff, and council members will all feel welcome, safe, and heard," Park wrote.

Hardesty's chief of staff didn't respond to an email requesting further comment.

Council to Consider Four Subsidized Housing Projects Wednesday

*By Jim Redden
April 14, 2019*

The four projects are eligible for property tax breaks to help support 32 units affordable to households earning 80 percent or less of the area median family income.

Property tax breaks to support the construction of 32 affordable apartments under Portland's inclusionary housing policy are scheduled to be considered by the City Council on Wednesday.

The apartments are in four different buildings scheduled for construction. The tax breaks are intended to ensure that lower-income households spend no more more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing. Eligible households must earn no more than 60 or 80 percent of the area median family income (MFI), depending on the projects.

In 2018, the Portland metro area MFI for a household of three is \$58,640. The tax breaks on the affordable units are good for 10 years, and their affordability must be guaranteed for 99 years.

The inclusionary housing (IH) policy was controversial when the council first approved it because it is required for all projects with more than 20 units, and some developers said it would discourage future construction by making financing difficult because the other tenants must essentially pay more than otherwise to help support the affordable units over time.

The city says the IH program is a success, however. The project went into effect in February 2017. During its first two years, the city has permitted, or is in process to permit, a minimum of 422 IH units from 65 development projects — the equivalent to more than \$34 million-dollar public subsidy from privately financed developments.

The four projects to be considered Wednesday are:

- Arbor Lodge Apartments, located at 6545 N. Denver Ave., where 10 of the 66 units will be affordable to households earning no more than 80 percent of MFI.
- Killingsworth North D Block, located at 5510 N. Denver Ave., where three of the 36 units will be affordable to households earning no more than 60 percent of MFI.
- Koz on Killingsworth, located at 151 N. Killingsworth St., where 13 of the 88 units will be affordable to households earning no more than 80 percent of MFI.
- Nomad, located at 5620 N. Interstate Ave., where six of the 130 units will be affordable to households earning no more than 60 percent of MFI.

You can learn more about why the city considers the IH program successful [here](#).

PBOT Removes Illegal Stop Signs at University of Portland

*By Zane Sparling
April 13, 2019*

City transportation bureau says North Portsmouth Avenue signage not needed due to low traffic.

Stop in the name of the law? Not quite.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation says a private university broke the law after it installed stop signs around crosswalks without authorization from the city's traffic engineer.

City workers removed the four signs from North Portsmouth Avenue in mid March, while students were enjoying Spring Break, and dumped them back in the University of Portland's lap. While some crosswalks in Portland are signalized to halt motor traffic, a city spokesman says stop signs should only be placed at intersections, not crosswalks.

"When people driving encounter a stop sign in a place where there's no traffic, they start to ignore it," wrote PBOT spokesman Dylan Rivera. "If someone is in a crash at a place with illegal signage, they could sue the person or entity that installed those illegal signs and win damages."

Playing defense, UP argues that the signs protected students crossing Portsmouth — which divides the main campus from the school's Beauchamp Recreation & Wellness Center.

"In our experience, the signs did cause traffic to stop, and this particular area on campus is a high-volume pedestrian traffic area," said Rachel Barry-Arquit, director of marketing and communications for the university.

"We hope the city will reconsider its decision to remove them."

According to a report in The Beacon student newspaper, the University of Portland erected the signs near Strong and Warren streets about a year ago without bothering to apply for permission, because administrators already knew the signs wouldn't meet official criteria.

Rivera says town and gown are working together on a plan for the city to relinquish ownership of several side streets, so the university can take over maintenance and other responsibilities.

But PBOT will continue to control Portsmouth Avenue in order to ensure access for fire trucks, squad cars and ambulances. Rivera says the bureau follows national traffic engineering standards when determining stop sign placement.

"We encourage the university to educate the campus community about safe driving and walking habits, and we would be happy to help with those efforts," he said.

Willamette Week

A Dozen Companies Apply to Put Scooters on Portland Streets This Spring

*By Elise Herron
April 11, 2019*

The city will allow up to 2,500 scooters at the start of the pilot.

E-scooters could be returning to Portland by the end of the month, and 12 companies have applied for inclusion in the city's second pilot program.

In the city's first, four-month pilot program last summer, five companies applied and three were accepted.

"This level of interest shows that Portland is a great place to do business," says Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman Dylan Rivera.

He adds that the agency does not yet know how many companies will be approved. But he says PBOT will allow up to 2,500 scooters at the start of the pilot.

Last month, PBOT said that if companies qualify for incentives, the number of scooters on Portland streets could increase to up to 15,000.

The companies that have applied for the pilot program are: Bird, Bolt, Car2Go, Clevr, Jump, Lime, Lyft, OjO, Shared Tech, Spin, Razor and Veoride.

Skip, one of the three companies that participated in the summer pilot, is notably absent from the list.

But Rivera attributes e-scooter operators' increased interest in Portland to the city's exemplary inaugural trial. "We had the most transparent e-scooter program in the nation last year, with the most publicly accessible data," he says, "and we know that cities and e-scooter companies from across the country are watching and learning from Portland's example."

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler Is Pushing for “Significant Changes” to a Plan to Regulate Tenant Screenings

*By Rachel Monahan
April 11, 2019*

An effort to combat discrimination in screening tenants awaits a City Council vote.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's office is championing new tenant-friendly policies designed to prevent discrimination and increase renters' access to housing.

The proposed ordinance would regulate the way that landlords screen tenants for a home—including giving more consideration to tenants with criminal backgrounds. That's raised the hackles of landlords, who have lobbied against the new requirements.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who serves as commissioner of the Portland Housing Bureau, wants the ordinance changed.

"As the policy stands in its current form, I believe there are significant changes necessary," Wheeler said in a statement. He praises Eudaly's efforts to tackle housing discrimination but adds a note of caution: "As a city, we should be seeking policies that address those issues, but right now the question is whether this proposal is the right way to go about it."

In answer to a follow-up question from WW, the mayor's office listed a series of concerns:

"Our primary concerns are those raised in public testimony," says Wheeler's spokeswoman Eileen Park, "including the rent to income ratios, the look-back period on criminal activity, potential support for small landlords and their ability to apply certain requirements, and also the impact on how we can continue to encourage housing development in our entire city—including how the available financial tools for development will respond to the proposed changes."

The ordinance requires landlords to offer an individualized assessment of tenants to reject them or, alternatively, requires that no tenant can be denied for criminal offenses that involve a misdemeanor older than three years, or a felony older than seven years. And the ordinance would allow landlords to require income of only two times the rent.

Last week's hearing over screening criteria grew contentious when the mayor scolded his colleagues for lack of civility toward an expert witness. He was later accused of applying a racist double standard in whom he criticized.

It's not clear that the mayor's vote will be required for passage—he has found himself outnumbered on at least two key votes at City Council since January. And the mayor's office wouldn't say if Wheeler would vote against the ordinance if it is not amended.

Eudaly says she is optimistic the mayor will support the ordinance.

"I met with the Mayor today and had a productive conversation with him about our FAIR policy package," says Eudaly. "I know that he understands the severe impact that housing discrimination has on our community, and believe he supports the overall goals of our policies. I remain hopeful that we can come to an agreement."

Other commissioners have yet to weigh in publicly.

"Commissioner Fish is having conversations with his colleagues, key stakeholders, and the City Attorney's office. I expect he'll have more to say soon," says Fish spokeswoman Sonia Schmanski.

Another hearing on the ordinance is scheduled for later this month.

Protester Loses Lawsuit Against City After Police Officer Broke Her Nose

By Katie Shepherd

April 12, 2019

The officer who arrested Margaret "Peggy" Zebroski placed his knee on her head with enough force to break her nose.

A protester who suffered a broken nose after being pinned to the ground by a Portland police officer lost her \$200,000 lawsuit against the city.

Margaret "Peggy" Zebroski, 68, was protesting a fatal police shooting in February 2017 when Portland police in riot gear showed up to disperse the crowd. She stayed put when police gave an order for the crowd to leave the area.

Zebroski testified in court that just before being arrested, she stepped forward to help an elderly friend who had fallen on the ground, when a police officer grabbed her.

The officer told the court he thought Zebroski was attempting to interfere with police arresting another protester.

The officer who arrested Zebroski placed his knee on her head with enough force to break her nose. The criminal charges against Zebroski were ultimately dropped.

On Friday, the jury decided the city was not liable for Zebroski's injuries.

"The City appreciates the time and attention given to this matter by the Court and the jury," says City Attorney Tracy Reeve. "We are grateful that the jury carefully considered the evidence and concluded that the police acted appropriately. We sincerely regret the unintended injury to Ms. Zebroski."

The city argued that protesters failed to comply with police orders to disperse, which led to police making arrests, including Zebroski.

Zebroski's suit is one of several complaints in which protesters allege Portland police improperly deployed force against demonstrators exercising their free speech rights. A group of protesters are also suing the bureau for kettling hundreds of people at a June 2017 rally and taking photos of their IDs.

Portland Mayor: Trump's Threat to Bus Immigrants to Sanctuary Cities Is "Unconscionable"

By Katie Shepherd

April 12, 2019

Oregon's 31-year-old state law restricting local coordination with immigration enforcement operations has often frustrated federal immigration officials.

Mayor Ted Wheeler lambasted President Donald Trump on Twitter after the Washington Post reported that the White House and federal immigration officials had considered bussing undocumented immigrants to so-called sanctuary cities and releasing them from federal custody.

The Post report revealed a proposal to ship undocumented immigrants to sanctuary cities, where local officials refuse to cooperate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as retaliation for Democrats' opposition to funding the border wall and other immigration enforcement actions.

"This is an unconscionable consideration by a President who is once again calling into question the moral bearings of our nation," Wheeler tweeted, in response to a tweet Trump had posted hours earlier. "To think about separating people from their families, bus them across the U.S., and then unceremoniously strand them in jurisdictions believed to be hostile to the President – speaks to this administration's depravity."

Wheeler has slammed the president before, notably calling the Trump administration's zero-tolerance and family separation policies "un-American" last summer. Portland hosted the first "Occupy ICE" protest that temporarily shut down a federal building where local ICE officers work. Wheeler instructed the Portland police to keep their distance from the protest camp unless there was a threat to peoples' safety.

Trump took to Twitter Friday morning to respond to the Post story, saying the federal government is giving "strong considerations" to releasing immigrant detainees in sanctuary cities.

Portland officials view the city as a sanctuary jurisdiction, and Oregon's 31-year-old state law restricting local coordination with immigration enforcement operations has often frustrated federal immigration officials. Oregon voters rejected a ballot measure to overturn that law last November.

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor: New Guy

By Alex Zielinski

April 11, 2019

Everything about Mayor Ted Wheeler's latest hire seems painfully deliberate.

On April 2, Wheeler announced he'd hired former Portland police commander Robert King to serve as his newest senior policy advisor on public safety.

Judging by King's past—and Wheeler's present—the appointment is as much a public relations strategy as it is a pragmatic hire.

King enters City Hall after 27 years with the PPB, during which he held nearly every position before retiring in 2018. While on the PPB, King also served as a respected president of the Portland Police Association (PPA), PPB's notoriously iron-fisted union (and a regular critic of sitting mayors).

Since entering office, Wheeler's struggled to earn the respect of Portland cops—in part, thanks to heated editorials written by current PPA President Daryl Turner—and could use the backing of a veteran cop to restore his image. With that in mind, King's appointment could be a calculated attempt to convince Portland's skeptical officers that the mayor is on their side.

And those optics could prove useful: In 2020, the city will dive into contract negotiations with the PPA—a historically fraught process.

King's inside knowledge of PPA's negotiating tactics is the kind of tool that could potentially give the city the upper hand in those tense union talks. But having King involved in these negotiations could also guarantee an extra layer of tension at the negotiating table, thanks to some unsettled beef between King and PPA's Turner.

In 2010, King was tasked with looking over PPB's training guidelines to determine whether officer Ron Frashour's use of deadly force against Aaron Campbell, a Black man with a mental illness, was justified. King found flaws in Frashour's conduct, and penned a critical summary that informed the city's decision to fire Frashour, a move vehemently opposed by the PPA. (Frashour was later reinstated through PPA arbitration.)

At the time, Turner excoriated King for standing by his summary in court, calling King's testimony "riddled with inconsistencies."

Hiring the rare Portland cop who publicly criticizes an officer could also signify Wheeler's attempt to appeal to police accountability activists. Unless they take a look at the rest of King's record.

In 1992, King fatally shot an 18-year-old robbery suspect after the teen stabbed him in the shoulder. In 1997, King was one of three officers who shot and killed a man who officers believed to be suicidal.

And in 2008, while serving as PPA president, King fought against then-Mayor Sam Adams's attempt to create a racial profiling committee that would recommend policies to help eliminate discriminatory practices within PPB. King went on to argue that "Portland police do not engage in racial profiling"—a statement that's been disproven time and time again—and hired an out-of-state statistical consultant to find data to back his claim.

After the Mercury first reported on King's hiring, King sent an unprompted email to the Mercury, explaining, "I have learned a great deal about implicit bias since making that statement a decade ago." He did not respond to the Mercury's request to elaborate.

Maybe King's truly updated his understanding of racial bias. Maybe he's repaired his relationship with the PPA. Or maybe he'll get officers to respect Wheeler. Or maybe not.

Displacement Now, or Displacement Later?

By Alex Zielinski

April 11, 2019

Portlanders Push for Stronger Anti-Displacement Policies

Portland is changing. By 2035, city planners estimate that Portland's population will grow by nearly 40 percent—to 880,000—with more than 100,000 new households. Without a serious increase in housing, the population boom is almost certain to cement the city's ugly legacy of displacement and homelessness.

In anticipation of Portland's looming population surge, planners have spent the past four years tinkering with a policy that would overhaul the city's residential zoning rules to allow more housing within city limits. The Residential Infill Plan (RIP) would lift Portland's ban on building so-called "middle housing"—duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes—in the vast majority of the city's neighborhoods, where current city rules only allow the construction of single-family homes. If all goes to plan, the project could add anywhere from 4,000 to 24,000 new housing options to Portland by 2035.

But despite its seemingly apolitical premise, RIP has become Portland's most divisive city project in decades.

"This is the most appalling idea that's been brought to city council since I've been here," says Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who's staunchly opposed to RIP's across-the-board approach to city planning.

City planners and housing advocates say the infill proposal would allow developers to add thousands of needed homes—and, in the process, eliminate outdated, racist zoning policies. Skeptics fear that lifting the ban on middle housing will only open the door to more high-end condo projects and mar the architectural character of classic Portland neighborhoods.

The divide has resulted in an incredibly tense and emotional debate, with accusations of overt racism and developer pandering scuttling any attempts to find compromise. Yet there's one overarching belief that most Portlanders seem to agree on: The city isn't doing enough to stop the displacement of low-income residents and communities of color.

"What we all know is that the status quo is not acceptable," says Sam Diaz, the head of the land use advocacy nonprofit Portland for Everyone, and a longtime advocate of RIP. "But how we address that reflects our community's different values."

In March, RIP won final approval from the city's Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC), paving the way for a final vote by city council. Before city commissioners decide on its fate, however, both supporters and skeptics of infill housing need to know what the city is doing to keep Portland's most vulnerable residents in their communities—regardless of whether or not the council chooses to squeeze more homes into the growing city.

After years of debate, the argument over RIP comes down to two imperfect options: displacement now or displacement later.

Based on the city's 2035 growth estimates, planners predict that new development will displace at least 950 renters who are currently living in single-family homes.

Under RIP, which would allow developers to replace one large house with up to four smaller homes (in a fourplex or cluster of smaller, standalone houses), planners estimate only 680 of those renters will be displaced. That's a 28 percent reduction, but there's a catch: While advocates argue that RIP would lead to less displacement overall, planners also predict the residents in three specific Portland neighborhoods may be at significantly higher risk of displacement under the proposal.

That's because the land in the Lents, Montavilla, and Brentwood-Darlington neighborhoods remains relatively cheap compared to the rest of the city, despite steadily-rising rents in these neighborhoods. The city believes RIP's passage will incentivize developers to seek out cheap, single-family homes in those neighborhoods—homes that are currently occupied by lower-income renters—and replace them with pricey duplexes or triplexes. Planners say this likely won't be the case where land is more expensive, like inner Portland neighborhoods that are already crowded with high-end condos.

"Optimally, we'd like to see a plan that reduced the displacement burden for everyone," says Morgan Tracy, the city planner who's managing RIP's development for Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. "But that's really, really hard to achieve."

Infill skeptics don't think RIP's overall displacement protections are worth the immediate threat of displacement in these neighborhoods, where many current renters are people of color.

“I really worry that we’re being asked to displace certain populations faster than others for the benefit of this greater good,” André Baugh, a member of the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC), said during a February meeting.

The PSC is tasked with reviewing city planning proposals before they’re punted to city council, and Baugh’s argument is why the PSC’s final vote to approve RIP was so narrow. The four out of nine members who voted against RIP’s passage in March said they believed the project didn’t do enough to prevent displacement of at-risk renters.

But many who are actively involved in curbing displacement question the sudden concern over gentrification from skeptics on the PSC and neighborhood groups.

“I believe they’re political opportunists,” says Pam Phan, an organizer with the housing advocacy group Anti-Displacement PDX. “I’ve not seen any of those folks use their work with their neighborhoods or take action on their own to eliminate segregation and displacement, until now.”

Phan sees RIP as an antidote to Portland’s long history of discriminatory zoning practices, when private landlords and city planners collaborated to keep both homeowners of color and low-income renters out of certain neighborhoods.

In 1959, Portland City Council passed sweeping restrictions against multi-unit homes in most residential neighborhoods. That vote came amid a national movement to use racist housing restrictions to retain some measure of racial segregation after the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision to desegregate schools.

Ever since, the only way to live in the majority of Portland neighborhoods has been to purchase a single-family home, rent a portion of one, or be fortunate enough to own or lease one of the duplexes, triplexes, or fourplexes built before the 1959 ban. Many of these older homes can be found in Southeast Portland’s Sunnyside and Buckman neighborhoods.

Over time, these restrictions have dramatically contributed to Portland’s dearth of affordable housing. Locally, the current median household income for a family of four is \$81,400. According to the National Association of Realtors, that income is not enough to make monthly payments—to say nothing of a down payment—on the average Portland home, which costs around \$420,000. Meanwhile, a 2017 study by the Portland Housing Bureau found that 52 percent of the city’s tenants pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent—which, under federal guidelines, officially qualifies them as “cost-burdened” renters.

Phan says the opposition to RIP that’s come from certain neighborhoods—like Beaumont-Wilshire, Laurelhurst, and Multnomah Village, where neighborhood groups argue the broad policy will change the “character” of their neighborhoods by adding smaller, modern homes next to large, historic, single-family residences—is merely a less overt form of segregation.

“It’s hard to see that it’s not racialized,” says Phan. “Rarely do we get to talk about maintaining the community character with neighborhoods of color.”

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty has also pushed back on the fears of those neighborhood groups.

“People are deathly afraid that their community will change, and I have news for them: It will!” say Hardesty, who cautiously supports infill. “We know thousands of more people are moving to Portland. Your neighborhood is going to change no matter what. The question is, how does it change? And will you play a part?”

Those questions are echoed by Commissioner Nick Fish, who says the debate over RIP comes down to one question: Who gets to benefit from a great neighborhood?

“Who is allowed to access strong schools, thriving businesses, and good infrastructure?” says Fish, who has yet to take an official position on RIP. “In a city that cares about equity, what can we do to open doors to neighborhoods only allowed to people with more means?”

Unlike many of the city’s housing programs, RIP was never meant to create affordable housing—it simply allows for more homes to be built in a city with a dwindling housing supply.

“We are talking about general housing affordability, not affordable housing,” says Morgan, the RIP project manager.

The infill plan was born in 2015 alongside the city’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan, which calculated that Portland would grow by 260,000 people in the next two decades. City planners came up with RIP as a response to a call to increase the housing supply to match this swelling population—while simultaneously not demolishing any more homes to make way for new condos. Along with lifting the infill ban, RIP caps the size of new development on traditional single-family properties, in order to make sure the new rules don’t usher in towering condos or so-called “McMansions.”

Still, developers do expect some low-priced housing to come out of RIP. Lifting the zoning ban means affordable-housing providers—including organizations that use federal grants to help low-income Portlanders secure mortgages—can begin building affordable middle housing in new neighborhoods.

“We often get approached by people offering us pieces of land that are in zones where we can’t build anything but a single-family home,” says Diane Linn, director of affordable housing provider Proud Ground. “That won’t allow us to build something that’s actually affordable.” The more units that can be built on a piece of land increases the amount of government subsidies that Proud Ground can use to lower mortgages.

“Every single new unit built changes lives,” says Linn. “Why limit that opportunity?”

But with Portland’s sky-high property costs, it’s expected the majority of developments built under new infill rules will remain out of reach for the average Portlander, let alone someone living paycheck to paycheck. RIP does allow developers to add more square feet to their multi-unit homes if they promise that one of their units will be affordable for someone making less than 80 percent of Portland’s median income. (For a one-person household, that means bringing in no more than \$45,600 a year.) It’s unknown, however, how many profit-driven developers will actually take advantage of that deal.

“If RIP doesn’t mandate affordability, there’s not going to be any affordability,” says Meg Hanson, a data analyst and co-founder of the Coalition to Prioritize Protect and Preserve Affordable Housing. “There’s a big difference between an incentive and a mandate. And incentives aren’t enough to drive affordable development.”

Hanson thinks the city could calm Portlanders’ valid reservations around RIP by requiring that developers prove a demolition won’t destroy properties that already offer affordable housing.

“If it’s an abandoned, falling-apart house, then, sure, they can demolish it,” Hanson says. “But if it’s a habitable, affordable home, developers will have to show that their planned duplex or fourplex will also be affordable.”

Until then, Hanson predicts RIP will only perpetuate the trend of predatory development companies—the folks behind the “WE BUY UGLY HOUSES” signs—that convince low-income homeowners to sell their house at or below market price, and then go on to replace that house with an expensive duplex, triplex, or fourplex, displacing the owners or renters.

This is what Adam Brunelle is most worried about. Brunelle is the director of Green Lents, a community advocacy nonprofit with an anti-displacement program. While Brunelle says he was concerned to hear that Lents was one of the few neighborhoods at risk of greater displacement under RIP, he wasn't surprised: Lents residents are already threatened by extreme displacement, regardless of RIP, Brunelle says.

“People will continue to get kicked out of Lents because of rent hikes—it’s already happening,” says Brunelle. “What I want to see is commitment from the city to stop it.”

Brunelle says Lents residents—a community made up of more people of color, immigrants, and refugees than most Portland neighborhoods—are disappointed by the relative inaction by the city to pump the brakes on gentrification already taking place in the neighborhood. He believes Lents could see the kind of untamed gentrification that nearly erased the Black community from North and Northeast Portland. He compares the recent explosion of pricey condos along North Williams to the city’s pending plan to turn a massive lot at 92nd and Harold into market-rate housing. “We’re well on our way from following North and Northeast Portland’s displacement trend,” says Brunelle. “This is an opportunity to get ahead of it.”

But, like other anti-displacement advocates, Brunelle knows RIP is not a silver bullet to solving Portland’s housing crisis.

“To me, displacement is caused by not having strong programming and protections for renters and low-income homeowners,” says Marisa Zapata, a land use planning professor at Portland State University. “Regardless of what happens to property values or zoning, the most important thing is to just have programs in place.”

Zapata says some of those anti-displacement programs are already in effect, thanks to the city’s tenant advocacy organizations and its burgeoning home-repair loan program. “But the city is still figuring out how to operate its equity lens,” she adds, “and what protecting people from displacement is.”

In an email to the Mercury, Mayor Ted Wheeler wrote that he wants to see more anti-displacement strategies woven into RIP before it progresses.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly’s office says it is up to the challenge.

Eudaly, who was elected on a platform of housing equity, has worked hard to break down the bureaucratic and financial barriers that have kept Portland property owners from building accessory dwelling units (ADUs, commonly called “mother-in-law” units) to lease out on their properties. Eudaly considers ADUs a win-win for Portlanders, as the extra income incentivizes homeowners to create more rental housing.

In most of Portland’s residential zones, property owners are currently allowed to build one ADU on their property. Under RIP, that number would grow to two, allowing for both a detached backyard apartment and an ADU built into the main home’s basement, attic, or garage.

Currently, the cost of building an ADU is still out of reach for many low-income homeowners. Lower-income homeowners have a trickier time securing construction loans, often due to a low credit score or scant savings to cover up-front costs. But Marshall Runkel, Eudaly’s chief of staff, has been working with local experts in the construction loan field to see how the city could help finance homeowners who want to lease out an ADU. Runkel believes that if the city can secure the right funding tools, those homeowners will be able to build ADUs, keep their properties, and help alleviate the city’s lack of affordable housing.

“We want to present an alternative to people feeling pressured by developers: Reinvest,” Runkel says.

According to Susan Brown, a home lending manager with Umpqua Bank, most large banks can’t offer construction loans to people solely based on the promise that their construction project will yield future income. But she believes the city and county could offer down-payment grants—similar to what the city currently offers first-time homebuyers—to people wanting to build an ADU.

“If a low-to-middle-income family could add an ADU to their portfolio,” says Brown, “it could make a difference for generations to come.”

Before he cast his vote against the infill plan, the Planning and Sustainability Commission’s André Baugh said he’d be more open to the proposal if the city was given more time to embed anti-displacement programs before RIP went into place. But for those who have already waited four years for this plan to see daylight, that’s not an option.

“Demolition is already happening. Huge homes are being replaced by more huge homes. Not doing anything is not really a choice,” says Bandana Shrestha, spokesperson for Oregon branch of the AARP.

By 2035, Shrestha says, the population of people over age 65 in the US will surpass those under 18. She can already see that trend playing out in Portland’s neighborhoods, where downsizing baby boomers are struggling to find small, accessible, and affordable homes.

“The main mission should be working with neighborhoods to get ahead of the displacement curve, while we open the door to more housing,” she says. “If we continue to do what we’re doing right now, we will only see more displacement.”

Ultimately the decision to approve or deny RIP—and whatever anti-displacement tools it includes—will come down to how city commissioners envision Portland’s future.

“We want Portland to be inclusive and welcoming for people of all ages, races, and income levels,” says Shrestha. “I hope city council keeps that in forefront as they make this decision. It’s time we lead with our values.”

Protester Loses Case Against Officer for Broken Nose

By Alex Zielinski

April 12, 2019

A 68-year-old woman has lost a case against the City of Portland for the injuries—both physical and emotional—sustained by a Portland police officer during a February 20, 2017 protest.

"I'm deeply disappointed by today's verdict," said plaintiff Peggy Zebroski. "Not so much for myself, but we need to hold the police department accountable for their tactics."

Zebroski was participating in a peaceful protest against the officer shooting of Quanice Hayes on February 20 when officers on bikes ordered protesters to move out of SW Third Ave, where a number of people—including Zebroski—were holding a banner reading "Don't Shoot Portland." When they didn't, officers called in Portland Police Bureau's (PPB) "hard squad," a team of cops dressed in all-black body armor, often called in to break up violent protests.

Officer Adi Ramic said he believed Zebroski, a petite woman, was trying to pull an armored officer off a male protester to stop him from getting arrested. Zebroski, however, said she was

only trying to help her elderly friend who had fallen down in the midst of the melee. Ramic pulled Zebroski out of the crowd and made her lie facedown on the street, using his knee to hold her head down on the cement.

It's that pressure that Zebroski said jammed her glasses into her face, breaking her nose in the process. She left the protest covered in bruises and bleeding from her face. Zebroski sued the city for the physical and emotional suffering incurred by the incident, asking for \$200,000 in damages.

On Friday, a 12-person jury denied that request.

"Today's verdict is a loss for Peggy, the public's right to assemble, and our constitutional right to peacefully protest," said Mat dos Santos, legal director for the ACLU of Oregon, at a press conference following the verdict. "When Portland police use excessive force against the public gathered in protest...this harms the very cornerstones of our democracy. In short, the use of force by PPB on peaceful protesters in Portland is retaliatory, unnecessary, and has had a chilling effect on free speech and assembly in our city and in our state."

Dos Santos said he believed the murkiness of the question jurors ultimately considered could have contributed to their verdict.

The jury was tasked with deciding whether Officer Ramic "intentionally caused a harmful or offensive contact with Ms. Zebroski."

"I think there's confusion about what intent meant in that particular instance," dos Santos said. "'Intent' didn't mean 'Intent to hurt,' it meant 'Did you intend to touch that person and was that touching unwanted?'"

He said the city intentionally focused their case on that point of confusion.

In his closing arguments Thursday, city attorney J Scott Moede focused on the fact that Ramic never intended to hurt Zebroski.

"He didn't punch her, he didn't give her an extra elbow, there was not an extra shove," said Moede. "It was an accident."

He underscored that Zebroski's glasses broke her nose, not Ramic himself (although it's assumed her glasses wouldn't have injured her if Ramic wasn't pressing her face into the cement). Moede said Ramic's demeanor in court—"soft spoken" and "he didn't lose his cool"—proved that he's a well-meaning officer.

"He's not a wild maniac," said Moede, "that's not a crazed police officer."

During questioning, Ramic explained that the stressful nature of protests put him more on edge, and made him more suspicious of protesters.

"Unfortunately during protests people are really mean, people try to hurt your feelings," Ramic said. "In the city of Portland, it's something we have to deal with as the police. It's an unnerving situation."

Ramic described many of the February 20 protesters as "anarchists"—men and women dressed in all black (often called "black bloc") with bandanas covering their faces.

"From my experience, a lot of black bloc anarchists are violent to officers, and commit crimes during demonstrations," Ramic said. However, he clarified: "I didn't believe Ms. Zebroski was an anarchist."

During his closing arguments Michael Willes, one of Zebroski's attorneys, said this generalization curtailed protesters' First Amendment rights. "The Portland Police don't see people, or protesters. They see threats," said Willes.

Like dos Santos, Willes said it shouldn't matter that Ramic didn't mean to hurt Zebroski—the fact he did still violates her civil rights.

At the February protest, Zebroski was marching as a member of Don't Shoot PDX, an activist group that challenges cases of police brutality and discrimination. After the Friday press conference, Don't Shoot PDX's founder Teresa Raiford said she wasn't surprised by the outcome of Zebroski's case.

"Everybody who's showed up for our events who has been arrested or assaulted [by police] has not received justice," said Raiford. But the fact that Zebroski's case wasn't dismissed before trial is a sign of progress, Raiford said.

"Getting it into the courtroom is part of the process that we need to see happen—because then, it's documented, her story is on the record, and we have an opportunity to appeal," she said. "For people with no privilege of legal support, it's not a loss. To have these big firms fighting the cases for people we represent in our activism, that's a gain."

It's unknown whether the ACLU will appeal this decision. Dos Santos said that Zebroski's case was just one of six protester cases that the ACLU is actively involved in. Yet, he said its resolution could have a profound impact on the way future protests play out in Portland.

"I worry about the repercussion for the public when officers hear time and time again, 'It is okay what you do, there are no consequences,'" said dos Santos. "A government is rightly judged by how it responds to the speech and expression of its people, even more so when that speech is critical of the government."

After the verdict was announced Friday, Zebroski said she hugged Ramic, accepted his apology, and made plans to get coffee.

"He's just a man," she said. "My concern is mostly with the command room that told him to charge into a crowd."

Asked if she'll continue participating in protests and demonstrations, Zebroski didn't hesitate: "I won't ever stop."

Mayor Wheeler to Trump: "Humans Are Not Pawns."

*By Alex Zielinski
April 12, 2019*

This morning began, as it usually does, with a incendiary tweet from Donald Trump. The theme? Forcing undocumented immigrants to live in so-called "sanctuary cities" as some type of punishment to the majority-liberal cities.

Of course, it's only the latest example of Trump demonizing people who've immigrated to the United States without documentation. (Not long after posting this tweet, Trump ordered Homeland Security close the US' southern border with Mexico to deter "dangerous" immigrants.)

Both Portland and the entire state of Oregon are protected by sanctuary laws, meaning that local law enforcement agrees not to share resident information with federal immigration issues, unless it's directly related to a crime.

In an email to the Mercury, Wheeler called the idea "unconscionable."

"To think about separating people from their families, bus them across the U.S., and then unceremoniously strand them in jurisdictions believed to be hostile to the President—speaks to this administration's depravity," Wheeler wrote. "To put it simply, humans are not pawns. This is not a game. These are people's lives."

Wheeler is currently under investigation by the union representing US Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees into how Wheeler handled last summer's Occupy ICE protests. Trump called for Wheeler's resignation during the protests themselves. In his email, Wheeler said Portland will continue to protect its sanctuary status.

"We strongly denounce the cruel efforts of this administration to retaliate against sanctuary cities," he added.

Both the Multnomah County District Attorney's office and the Multnomah County Sheriffs office declined to comment.

Many immigrant advocacy groups across the country responded to Trump's message with open arms, reminding the public how integral immigrants are to US communities. Causa, an Oregon immigration rights nonprofit, joined that chorus.

"Immigrants living in Oregon are part of our families, communities, workplaces, and places of worship. They are our neighbors, friends, and local business owners. Immigrants are contributors to our communities," wrote Iván Hernández, a spokesperson for Causa. "Diversity is one of America's greatest strengths—it's part of what defines us as a nation. It is important that America remains a beacon of hope and freedom for people all over the world."

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Temporary Plan Sought for City Park

By Chuck Slothower

April 11, 2019

More than a year after closing O'Bryant Square because of structural deficiencies, Portland Parks & Recreation still has no capital budget, no design and only a vague time line for reopening the half-block plaza in downtown Portland.

Parks officials hope to reopen the public plaza by 2023. By then, it's possible that a neighboring 35-story mixed-use tower, not yet started but expected to hold more than 1 million square feet of space, will be completed.

City officials, architects and downtown business owners met Wednesday to discuss the future of O'Bryant Square as part of Design Week Portland. The event, hosted by Hennebery Eddy Architects, came as O'Bryant Square was closed for the 399th consecutive day.

Hennebery Eddy Architects, led by associate principal Will Ives, has worked pro bono on various design concepts for O'Bryant Square. The early concepts have focused on creating a "flexible, open public space," Ives said.

The parks bureau closed O'Bryant Square on March 5, 2018, after visible structural issues were discovered in the underground parking garage. The bureau soon erected a fence that has remained in place.

In the months since, the city has made little progress on reopening the plaza.

“It’s nothing urgent or imminent,” Parks & Recreation spokesman Mark Ross said.

At the same time, the parks bureau has struggled with a \$7 million budget deficit, and is considering closing Sellwood Community Center and Columbia Pool in ongoing budget talks.

“We have a lot of needs and very little money,” Ross said.

The parks bureau has dedicated \$1.5 million in system development charges toward planning for O’Bryant Square’s future. The bureau’s proposed 2019-20 budget includes no additional funding for O’Bryant Square.

A full rebuild of the plaza is estimated to cost \$10 million or more.

“For us, that is a huge lift,” said Britta Herwig, the parks bureau’s capital program manager.

The parks bureau has also undergone leadership transitions. Adena Long, formerly of New York City, was appointed parks director in February; Kia Selley had served as interim director for several months after Mike Abbaté resigned in May 2018.

In August 2018, Mayor Ted Wheeler reassigned oversight of the bureau from Commissioner Amanda Fritz to Commissioner Nick Fish.

“We absolutely have common cause in getting it reopened,” said Sonia Schmanski, Fish’s chief of staff.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly’s office has also been involved in O’Bryant Square discussions. Eudaly’s chief of staff, Marshall Runkle, is awaiting the results of soil tests. Initial analysis suggested soils are pressing laterally against the parking structure, Runkle said.

Depending on the results of the soil tests, Runkle is working on a plan to reopen O’Bryant Square pending a long-term project to rebuild the plaza.

“We’re going hard on: is there an interim solution?” Runkle said. “We should know in a matter of weeks the results of those tests, and I think that will help us get to the next step in this conversation.”

O’Bryant Square opened in 1967 as a continuation of the Park Blocks, Parks Foundation Executive Director Randy Gragg said. It arrived as Portland was establishing public spaces throughout downtown, including Lovejoy Plaza in 1966 and Keller Fountain Park in 1970.

O’Bryant Square was for a time a vibrant gathering place for Portlanders, Gragg said.

“This is where people went to mourn the death of John Lennon in 1980,” he said.

Over time, O’Bryant Square came to be associated with drug use and homelessness. The plaza suffered from a lack of ground-floor activity on neighboring blocks to the north, west and east, where large office buildings and a parking lot lack retail spaces facing the plaza. The fountain was shut off in the early 2000s.

“It’s sort of a textbook case of how not to design a park for public use,” Gragg said.

Use of the park grew during the recession as the parking lot on Block 216 became a popular attraction for food carts. Many customers of the block’s more than 50 food carts would eat their meals in O’Bryant Square. The remaining food carts are expected to be evicted as soon as this summer to prepare for excavation of the tower site.

There have been some suggestions from Gragg and others that O'Bryant Square could be part of a Culinary Corridor through downtown Portland. The City Council may consider a resolution to that effect, Runkle said.

There should be a solution for O'Bryant Square, said Tim Eddy, president of Hennebery Eddy Architects.

"It was an open space that had its issues, but it was a really valuable, heavily used open space in downtown Portland," he said.

OPB

Study: East Portland Is Most Vulnerable To Flooding And Extreme Heat

*By Meerah Powell
April 11, 2019*

A Portland State University study found that east Portland residents are most vulnerable to extreme weather including extreme heat and flooding.

The PSU study used a topographic wetness index and urban heat index to model how seasonal flooding and extreme heat affect Portland. Researchers also looked at variables in neighborhoods such as education and income levels for comparison.

They found that poorer, low-lying areas in east Portland, specifically along Interstate 205, were most affected by seasonal hazards. Conversely, more affluent areas like Portland's west hills and central northeast and southwest neighborhoods showed the lowest risk.

Heejun Chang, a professor and chair of the geography department at PSU and one of the researchers in the study explained that one of the biggest things the city can do to improve weather-vulnerable areas is to increase the amount of green infrastructure to absorb water and increase shade.

Whereas wealthier areas have more parks and trees, areas in east Portland have less "vegetative surfaces."

"Installing green infrastructure, or even like a green roof on those industrial and commercial buildings, they can help mitigate flooding and heat islands," Chang said.

The city also needs to do more than just installation, he said.

"Maintaining those green infrastructures also becomes important. Like any infrastructure, that green infrastructure has a life span. Unless it's well-maintained, it will not function in the way it's been designed," Chang said. "So that does require some outreach and education to citizens that live in those areas."

Chang said the communities living along I-205 are especially unique in their demographics.

"Particularly in east Portland, I found that in the past 10 or 15 years those minority ethnic groups have increased exponentially in those areas; those folks may not speak English, but the city still needs to reach out to educate those folks," he said.

Along with east Portland, other areas affected by both flooding and high-heat are southeast Portland and north Portland.

Chang said he hopes this research can be used as framework for other cities looking to do similar studies.