

## The Oregonian

### Fact-Checking Mayor Ted Wheeler's 2019 State of the City Address

*By Gordon Friedman  
May 1, 2019*

After delivering his annual State of the City address on Monday, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler told reporters he designed the speech to be “more about values” than policy.

But he gave a speech that included a litany of impressive claims of success tied to his administration's work.

Those statements mostly concerned homelessness, housing and policing – and the considerable strides Wheeler said City Hall had made on each.

Here is The Oregonian/OregonLive's check on some of the factual assertions from the mayor's address:

**Claim:** The city is “more than halfway” to delivering the 1,300 affordable housing units promised to voters of the Portland Housing Bond.

**Fact check:** City data shows 634 bond-funded units are “in progress.” Only 350 or so of those units are actually available to or occupied by low-income Portlanders.

Projects that will house hundreds of people in need, such as those on Southeast Powell Boulevard and Northeast Prescott Street, are not yet built. Others were acquisitions of existing properties that needed to be partially or fully demolished and renovated.

Families or individuals are living in 262 apartments at The Ellington, a complex in Northeast Portland that the city purchased to preserve its affordability to low-income families; in 51 apartments at a new complex the city funded at Northeast 105th Avenue on Burnside Street; and in some rooms of the Westwind single room occupancy building in Old Town.

**Claim:** The city has “added more than 600 units of supportive housing” – apartments coupled with on-site social services – and those units are “already open or in progress.”

**Fact check:** This claim is difficult to verify without seeing an exhaustive list of supportive housing projects. But back-of-the-napkin math shows at least 150 of the units Wheeler references are “in progress” – property bought or construction started – but not actively housing anyone.

City and county officials have said since September 2018 that 500 supportive housing units were already in place or in development and more have been announced since then. At that time, they said they hope to add 200 a year, so that would put Wheeler's figure on track or even behind that projection.

**Claim:** City programs “moved more than 6,000 people out of homelessness and into housing last year” and “prevented nearly 7,500 people from becoming homeless.”

**Fact check:** The city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services reports that, for fiscal 2017-18, about 5,900 people moved out of homelessness and into permanent housing, meaning Wheeler likely slightly overstated the facts.

For that same time period, the Joint Office reports more than 8,000 people received rent assistance intended to keep them from losing their housing. The mayor thus understated the city's prevention efforts in his address.

Claim: The city has "doubled" the number of its homeless shelter beds.

Fact check: This is true as of two years ago. When Wheeler came into office, there was a city-county effort to do this and it was reported as done during his first year, when the number went from approximately 600 to 1,200.

There is also a caveat of how shelter is defined. Here it includes motel vouchers if there is not a bed available in a traditional shelter.

Claim: A city program meant to help African Americans move back to their historically black neighborhoods has "funded more than 500 new units of affordable rental housing."

Fact check: This figure is accurate.

The city has approved plans for 501 rental units via the program, called the North/Northeast Neighborhood Housing Strategy, and opened 131 last year. Fifty are under construction, and 320 are in the building permit process, according to the program's annual report.

Claim: "Thanks to the city and our partners, we helped 35,000 people stay in housing, return to housing, find shelter, get access to services, and find jobs last fiscal year."

Fact check: This figure is accurate, and the Joint Office presented it publicly last fall. The use of the word "and," however, could be misleading as the figure represents the number of people who used any of the services Wheeler mentioned and includes people who did not get help with housing.

Claim: Police Chief Danielle Outlaw "brought in procedural justice training and implicit bias training" to the Portland Police Bureau.

Fact check: Wheeler's claim about new implicit bias training is true, but procedural justice training is not new. Outlaw has overseen in the start of an "implicit bias" training program.

The Police Bureau has for at least three years trained its officers on procedural justice, the concept of fairness and transparency in decision-making. Last year's city budget included funds to hire a procedural justice instructor at the Police Bureau.

Claim: Police officer use of force is "down across the board."

Fact check: This is true when comparing the first and last quarters of 2018, but how 2018 compares to previous years is unknowable.

Police officers filed 602 use of force reports during the first quarter of 2018, and 386 reports in the fourth quarter. That's a 35 percentage point decrease.

But the Police Bureau put in place new use of force measurements last year, rendering 2018 reports "not comparable" to other years', according to the city's own assessments. That makes it difficult to assess use of force trends.

# Division Street Crosswalk Was a ‘Disaster’ before Hit-and-Run Injured 6-Year-Old

*By Andrew Theen*

*April 30, 2019*

Matt McCally has seen all manner of bad driving from his office window facing Southeast Division Street: a car blowing out all four tires; another bursting into flames after plowing into a raised median; and countless examples of motorists failing to yield to pedestrians.

He wasn't there to witness the latest example of vehicular crime on Monday evening, when a 6-year-old girl was struck and injured by a hit-and-run driver while she walked with her mother across Division Street at 107th Avenue under a protected flashing beacon.

The hit-and-run occurred on a stretch of one of Portland -- and the state's -- most dangerous roads. Southeast Division Street is ground zero for much of what the city hopes to accomplish as it tries to eliminate all traffic fatalities by 2025 through its Vision Zero campaign.

According to police, the girl was walking with her mother at a signaled pedestrian crossing with a flashing beacon, a lone refuge for pedestrians for about five blocks in either direction of the urban highway in the Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhood, when she was hit.

The mother and her 6-year-old daughter had activated the pedestrian crossing beacon and two lanes of cars stopped to allow them to cross. But police said preliminary investigation indicates the driver of a white sedan passed two lanes of cars on the right side and plowed through the bike lane and hit the child. The woman was not injured.

The car kept going, and the driver remains wanted by police.

Lt. Kristina Jones, a Portland Police Bureau's spokeswoman, said she didn't know whether the girl remained in the hospital, but said "she was treated and was expected to be released" with non-life-threatening injuries. Jones said language barriers were one reason she couldn't provide more information on Tuesday.

Portland has already lowered the speed limit on this five-lane stretch of Division to 30 miles per hour. It also has installed safety cameras to ticket speeders on a swath 40 blocks east of there, and plans an additional \$7 million redesign of the street to build a raised median for dozens of blocks, add protected bike lanes and speed up transit through the corridor.

McCally said those changes wouldn't mean much without more traffic enforcement.

"I've never once seen anyone get pulled over on my stretch of Division for speeding, drunk driving, anything like that," he said from the office of his Parents for Alternate Support Solutions, a community center for adults with disabilities. "You can put all the crosswalks in you want. If there's going to be no enforcement of the law, what's going to prevent people?"

Just last week, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the transportation bureau, weighed in on a "brutal, heartbreaking month" on Portland streets as 9 people were killed in traffic incidents in less than two weeks.

"Infrastructure improvements will help reduce these tragedies," she wrote on Facebook. "But we cannot prevent all crashes, injuries, and deaths on our streets if drivers choose not to obey traffic laws and pay attention to the road."

The police bureau remains decimated by an estimated 120 officer vacancies and the inability to recruit or hire new cadets for those positions.

John Brady, Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman, said in an email that the city didn't formally keep track of hit-and-run incidents, but was aware of three fatal crashes in 2019, all killing pedestrians.

Portland's latest hit-and-run occurred at an intersection that should be a safe place amid a torrent of traffic.

On Tuesday, this reporter used the crossing beacon twice, and multiple vehicles failed to stop after the lights were illuminated and an audio message in English and Spanish instructed pedestrians that it was safe to cross.

Marshall Runkel, Eudaly's chief of staff, said in an email that the driver must "be apprehended and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

"There's much more we can do to make our streets more safe, and we also need to ramp up enforcement so that people know that there will be severe consequences for illegal, dangerous driving," he said.

Division is consistently marked as one of the most dangerous roads in Portland for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. At least 19 people have died and 129 seriously injured on Division in the last decade, city records show.

According to city transportation officials, a marked crosswalk, pedestrian beacon and pedestrian island were installed in 2016.

McCally, who has called outer Southeast Portland neighborhoods his home for his entire life, said this stretch of Division Street has been "a disaster from the beginning."

In addition to the extreme example like the car fire, McCally said he's seen frequent cars slamming into the traffic island and knocking down signs that alert drivers to watch for pedestrians.

In 2017, the city extended the pedestrian island and added more street lighting. It also extended the curb between a protected bike lane and the vehicle traffic on the north side of the intersection.

McCally said those changes only came after frequent "griping" for changes by himself and others.

Westbound travelers were continually cutting into oncoming eastbound traffic to make left turns onto 107th Avenue, he said.

"I kept bothering the city over and over and over again until they finally put these cones out here," he said, pointing to plastic wands spaced out for several feet on the edge of the raised median.

Those wands were finally largely successful in preventing drivers from heading into oncoming traffic to cut through the neighborhood.

Brady said the city plans to add two more rapid crossing beacons in the next two months on Division – at 115th and 133rd Avenues. The city will also fill in sidewalks as needed and fix curb ramps to make them wheelchair accessible between 102nd and 157th Avenues. Design on the larger project to add a center median and buffered bike lanes are still in the design phase, and construction is expected to begin in 2020.

# The Portland Tribune

## Pods power Kenton Women's Village

*By Stephanie Basalyga*

*May 01, 2019*

**Local companies build sleeping pods for relocated village where homeless women have a chance to reclaim their lives.**

Bremik Construction has become a common name in the world of affordable housing in the Portland metro area. The company, as general contractor, has been attached to more than a few large-scale projects designed to provide housing options for people who make significantly less than median income.

But the company recently had a chance to help create a different kind of step on the path to affordable housing for one specific segment of Portland's population.

Bremik was one of 21 teams representing Portland-area commercial and residential construction companies that signed up to help build sleeping pods for the new location of Kenton Women's Village, which offers transitional housing and services for homeless women.

The teams participating in the Kenton Women's Village Pod Building Challenge spent March and the first few days of April constructing one of three basic pod designs and then adding their own touches. The results of those efforts were unveiled during a celebration on April 5 that included the presentation of awards in categories such as most innovative use of materials and best of show.

The friendly competition offered more than bragging rights for the builders, though. The challenge also offered a rare opportunity for companies that often find themselves bidding for similar projects to come together, united by a common goal.

"For everyone, I think it's all about providing a home for someone," said Todd Duwe, Bremik's vice president. "There are all the different levels of affordable housing. This is really the first step from being homeless to moving along that continuum."

### **New digs**

Kenton Women's Village opened in the Kenton Neighborhood in 2017 on a piece of property on North Argyle Street owned by what is now Prosper Portland. Supported by several agencies and organizations, the Village started as a one-year, small-focus project with 14 sleeping pods to help homeless women begin the transition of moving off the streets and eventually into permanent affordable housing.

In addition to having a place to sleep and store their belongings — each house featured a locking door — the women had access to a community kitchen and shower facilities as well as services such as case management, employment assistance and access to physical and mental health care provided through a nonprofit organization called Catholic Charities of Oregon.

With the unanimous support of residents of Kenton, the Village began to move into its second year in the spot on Argyle in June 2018. However, at the end of that summer, Prosper Portland announced the land the Village was using was needed for an affordable housing project set to break ground in early 2019.

A search began to find a new home for the Women's Village. Kenton neighborhood residents voiced support for keeping the community in the area, with land belonging to the city of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services identified as the new home of the Village.

Even though the new spot was a just a few blocks away, at the corner of North Columbia Boulevard and Argyle, the location needed work. LMC Construction, assisted by students from building industry programs that included the Northwest College of Construction, volunteered to prepare the site, including laying new concrete pads for the pods.

Village administrators, however, determined that only seven of the original pods featured workable designs that could be used at the new site, leaving the Village short by more than a dozen pods. That's when the idea for the Pod Building Challenge began to take shape.

### **Teaming up**

Companies interested in participating in the Kenton Women's Village Pod Building Challenge came together at the beginning of February to learn details about the effort. The Challenge focused on three designs created by SRG Partnership, ScottArchitecture and Portland State University's Center for Innovative Design. The teams taking part in the challenge were each assigned a design.

Catholic Charities, which operates the Women's Village, will be the party handling any future repairs of the pods once the structures are put in place. So, while teams participating in the Challenge agreed to provide most of the materials needed to build their pods, there were some materials and features that needed to be consistent. All of the doors and windows for the pods, for example, are the same, a contribution from Oregon-based manufacturer JELD-WEN.

Teams were encouraged, however, to add their own innovative touches. They spent the first few weeks procuring materials, tapping suppliers and partners in the building community for donations and contributions.

For R&H Construction, tasked with building the "Catalyst" design from ScottArchitecture, adding an innovative touch meant working with suppliers like the Closet Factory to create lots of drawers, shelves and cupboard space for storage of personal materials. The team also added a planter and trellis to the outside porch area to provide a sense of individuality and privacy for the future tenant.

R&H has an in-house committee made up of employees that vets community-service projects to make sure they align with the areas the company has identified as focuses for its volunteer efforts, Marissa Essex, a project assistant, said.

The team assembled its pod in a donated space near the company's new headquarters in Northwest Portland, a location that allowed staff members to come in early or stay late after a work day, or spend lunch breaks, working on the project.

The fact that the R&H pod was destined to become part of Kenton Women's Village held special meaning for Essex, who helped build the structure.

"(The Village) is in my neighborhood, so this is near and dear to my heart," she said.

### **Aligned values**

At Bremik Construction, the company chooses a new project each quarter for its employees to work on to give back to the community. Because of the company's focus on affordable housing, many of those company-wide volunteer efforts are connected to that concept, Alexi Meuwissen, Bremik's director of marketing, said.

With that in mind, the company felt it fitting that the Pod Challenge for the Kenton Women's Village would be its first volunteer effort for 2019, according to Duwe and Meuwissen.

Bremik was handed the Catalyst design and took a walk on the sustainable side by reusing high-quality siding left over from a recent project and then adding elements donated by suppliers such as Pioneer Sheet Metal, Pacific Lumber Resources and Stoner Electric that would offer durability.

"The material we chose for the exterior are lower maintenance: hardy siding, a sheet metal roof," Duwe said. "From a constructability standpoint, it is a very well-designed and well-built pod. It's super sturdy. This thing is going to last for years."

The company also decided to create an environment where a new occupant could walk in and feel instantly at home. In addition to including shelves and spaces to store personal items, Bremik's team added artwork with inspiring messages and images. The team also outfitted their pod with bedding, black-out shades for privacy and an inventory of toiletries.

When the pod-building teams came together on April 5 to add the last touches to their structures before the awards presentation, Bremik was joined by students from Constructing Hope, a pre-apprenticeship program. The company also plans to meet with the program's students at a later time to discuss how the pod came together.

"We'll be using it as a learning opportunity for (them)," Duwe said.

### **Home sweet homebuilding**

While more than half of the companies involved in the Pod Challenge were from the commercial construction sector, local homebuilding companies also came to the table. Taking the lead in that effort was the Home Builders Foundation, an arm of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland that focuses on building and repairing housing for the homeless as well as for other community groups.

When Brenda Ketah, the foundation's executive director, heard about the Pod Challenge, she decided to drum up support for the event at a general meeting for the HBA's 2019 Street of Dreams. In the end, the Home Builders Foundation and the HBA ended up with nine teams. Two of those teams, one sponsored by Legend Homes and the other by Stephens Homes, were made up of members of the HBA's Professional Women in Building Council. Another company, DR Horton, had four teams build pods.

Ketah's presentation at the Street of Dreams meeting brought both the Kenton Women's Village and the Pod Challenge to the attention of homebuilder Natalie Long.

Long and Jaime Harris started Elite Development Northwest, a women-owned firm that usually focuses on luxury homes, in 2006. For the Pod Challenge, Long and Harris tapped their subcontractors and suppliers for help with both materials for the pod and the actual construction.

They livened up their basic "Pop Up" pod design by adding distinctive touches such as a place for the occupant to sit and eat along with plenty of space for storing clothes and personal items.

Another unique touch in the Elite Development sleeping pod was a mural painted by an artist friend on the wall above the bed.

"We're hoping this gives whomever gets to live here a place to come and heal and feel safe," Long said. "I think that's pretty important as a woman."

## **Getting settled**

Andersen Construction Foundation and Andersen Construction, which built a pod, volunteered time and resources to move all of the pods and get them situated at the new Village location.

Thirteen of the pods were slated to become shelters in the new Village. The rest will be used for additional homeless villages that Catholic Charities is planning to open in the future, Ketah said.

Even with the new pods now in place, though, there is still be work to be done in order to bring the village to full occupancy. Support areas, including a community kitchen and bathroom facilities, need to be built. Ketah's group is working with Catholic Charities to see how the Foundation may be able to help get the second phase finished so that women can start to move into the new pods.

"We're just looking at what our options are for the next phase," Ketah said.

## **Team spirit**

Twenty-one teams representing local commercial and residential building companies volunteered time, expertise and materials to build sleeping pods as part of the 2019 Kenton Women's Village Pod Building Challenge:

Catalyst Design

BC Custom Construction\*

Bremik Construction

Builders FirstSource\*

Lease Crutcher Lewis

Lovett Deconstruction

P&C Construction

R&H Construction

Skanska USA Building

Pop Out Design

Andersen Construction

DR Horton 2 \*

DR Horton 3 \*

Elite Development\*

Professional Women in Building (sponsored by Legend Homes)\*

Rebuilding Center

Safe Pod

Associated General Contractors/ NW College of Construction

DR Horton 1 \*

DR Horton 4\*

LMC Construction

O'Neill/ Walsh Community Builders



Professional Women in Building (sponsored by Stephens Homes)\*

Turner Construction

\*A team organized through the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland and the Home Builders Foundation

## Willamette Week

### The Portland Bureau of Transportation Creates Scooter Parking Spots—23 of Them

*By Elise Herron*

*April 30, 2019*

**The bureau concedes the spaces are meager, but says it hopes to “show riders where scooter parking is especially encouraged.”**

Electric scooters returned to Portland last weekend. The city's Transportation Bureau hopes it can persuade you to stop dumping your ride in the middle of the sidewalk.

During last summer's inaugural, four-month trial program, the No. 1 complaint from Portlanders was that people rode scooters on sidewalks and left them parked haphazardly, blocking the path of seniors and people with disabilities.

This spring, the Portland Bureau of Transportation has responded with designated scooter parking spaces. The bureau announced its plan with some fanfare last week, but didn't specify how many spaces it would create. So we asked.

The answer: 23 spaces, citywide.

A spokesman for the agency, John Brady, says 10 parking spots have been painted already, and PBOT plans to add 13 more by the end of the week. Like last summer, scooter riders can still drop off the devices wherever they end their ride. The city expects as many as 2,500 scooters on the streets this summer.

Brady says PBOT created the spaces by repurposing former Biketown racks. "All 23 spots are at Biketown stations," he says.

The bureau concedes the spaces are meager, but says it hopes to "show riders where scooter parking is especially encouraged."

Scooter companies are also required to use geofencing technology to keep riders from ending trips in city parks, which is prohibited. Riders caught zooming down sidewalks or parking scooters in a prohibited area can be fined \$15 to \$50.

# **PSU Blocks Off Swath of Southwest Montgomery Street From Cars**

*By Sophie Peel*

*April 30, 2019*

**The month-long project aims at encouraging students to use the block as a safe community spot.**

Starting tomorrow, Portland State University will close a one-block length of Southwest Montgomery Street at the edge of campus to all vehicle traffic.

The month-long experiment will help University staff and the Portland Bureau of Transportation determine whether to permanently eliminate cars from traveling through that section of the street.

Advocates hope that the pilot program will encourage pedestrians to see the block as a "public space for students" that will help "[define] the school's identity in downtown Portland," says Julia Michel, one of the school's planning analysts.

Walkers, bikers, and—dare we say it—scooters are encouraged to use the block as a safe place to engage in alternative transportation. The school says it will add lighting, chairs and tables, and street art to make the block more appealing to pedestrians.

The project falls under a greater city initiative to transform Montgomery Street into a pedestrian-friendly corridor from the West Hills to the Willamette River.

During the month of May, drivers heading east on Montgomery Street will have to take a three-block detour to get back on the street.

The school's project website says that the experiment is a "great opportunity for members of the PSU community to engage with the public realm and make this underutilized street at the heart of our campus into a more welcoming and inclusive place."

Project managers will field community input and data about usage during the experiment to test the viability of turning the block into a permanent no-vehicle space.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **PSU Will Close One Block to Cars in May—and Perhaps Permanently**

*By Blair Stenvick*

*April 30, 2019*

Throughout May, cars won't be allowed on one downtown Portland block.

Portland State University (PSU) and the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) announced Tuesday morning that a block of PSU's campus—SW Montgomery, between SW 6th and SW Broadway—will be closed to automobile traffic during the month of May. Called the Montgomery Pop-Up Plaza pilot project, the car-free block should make it easier for pedestrians and bicyclists to get around.

If the pilot project goes well, the car-free block could become a permanent fixture at PSU. That's happened before in downtown Portland: Ankeny Plaza became permanently car-free in 2016, after a successful 2014 pilot program.

"As always, we will be using a data-driven approach with traffic counts, surveys and other public engagement that will better inform us as we test this street prototype," said Chris Warner, the interim PBOT director, in a press release.

In addition to making car-free travel easier and less dangerous, PSU also hopes the Montgomery Pop-Up Plaza will become the social heart of the campus. Parking spaces will be transformed into open seating areas designed by PSU's Center for Public Interest Design, and the university is planning a slate of events and activities for the month. That includes a kick-off event at noon on Wednesday, May 1.

The idea for a car-free SW Montgomery block originally came from the Southwest Montgomery Green Street plan, a 2009 concept from PSU and PBOT that would have created a pedestrian and bike-friendly path connecting Portland's West Hills to the Willamette River. That plan was never enacted, but the Montgomery Pop-Up Plaza is a chance for at least one block of it to become permanent.

The SW Montgomery block is adjacent to PSU's Urban Plaza and the SW Park Blocks, two bustling parts of campus.

"Turning this particular block of SW Montgomery into a public space for students will really help establish PSU's heart of campus, better defining the school's identity in downtown Portland," said Julia Michel, a PSU planning analyst, in a press release.

PSU and PBOT's announcement comes at a particularly fraught time, as 2019's tally of traffic-related fatalities in Portland continues to climb, and transportation advocates call for better pedestrian and bike safety measures. According to PBOT's count, about half of this year's traffic deaths were those of pedestrians or bicyclists who were hit by cars.