

The Oregonian

Northwest Portland homeless ‘navigation center’ opens in lauded public-private partnership

By Molly Harbarger

August 26, 2019

A homeless shelter funded in part by private sector donations opened Monday as part of a summer push to remake Portland’s shelter system.

The Harbor of Hope River District Navigation Center was the brainchild of developer Homer Williams. He raised about \$3 million from Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle and other private donations to cover the \$3.5 million construction costs for the giant tent-like structure.

“We have in our city a humanitarian crisis,” Williams said at the unveiling. “Today, this is a step on a very, very long journey.”

The shelter can serve up to 100 people at a time and will be open all hours, all days. Nonprofit Transition Projects will operate the shelter. People interested in staying there must make reservations through Transition Projects.

Several officials praised the shelter as an example of a successful public-private partnership, with Mayor Ted Wheeler calling it “one of the most ambitious” to date to combat the growing homeless population.

However, it wasn’t originally envisioned to be a partnership.

Williams, and his nonprofit Harbor of Hope, initially promised that the shelter and its services would be entirely paid by the private sector.

Harbor of Hope broke ground last April on land donated by Portland’s urban renewal agency, which will retain ownership of the land. The city waived permit fees.

By the time Williams raised the \$3.5 million estimated to complete the project, the cost had doubled.

The Joint Office of Homeless Services, which is funded by both the city and county, agreed to contribute the first year’s operating budget, which will pay for staff, programming and day-to-day needs at the shelter. Officials estimate that to cost at least \$1 million.

The “navigation center” model is an adaptation of what San Francisco and other cities have done. It combines traditional shelter space with intensive help from service providers to help the people who stay at the shelter get into permanent housing as quickly as possible. It also has laundry facilities, showers and other amenities.

By the time it opened Monday, the idea is less novel than when proposed. This summer, the Joint Office unveiled the Laurelwood Center, which will house up to 120 women and couples, as well as provide on-site social services.

Officials noted Monday that the new openings and restructuring of the shelter system is intended to bring more spaces in line with that model.

Earlier this summer, Lilac Meadows, a 40-room family shelter on Southeast Powell Boulevard, opened in a former motel. Twenty-six more family shelter beds will open later this year in a Portland Homeless Family Solutions-run shelter in Lents.

4-alarm grass fire spreads destroys 2 buildings, burns several others in NE Portland

By Jim Ryan

August 26, 2019

A 4-alarm grass fire destroyed two buildings, burned several others and prompted evacuations Monday in Northeast Portland.

Lt. Rich Chatman, a Portland Fire & Rescue spokesman, said a townhouse and old fitness center were destroyed by the wind-driven blaze, which cropped up near 85th Avenue and Siskiyou Street. Four other townhouses were burned, and the Lumberyard Bike Park was also damaged, Chatman said.

About 50 cars parked in an area lot were destroyed, as well, Chatman said. No one was seriously hurt.

The blaze, which initially spewed smoke that was visible from downtown Portland, started amid overgrown blackberry bushes and trees on the site of an old driving range, Chatman said. It eventually covered about 4 acres.

The cause of the fire has not been determined, Chatman said.

The Lumberyard Bike Park, which offers indoor and outdoor BMX and mountain biking, said on Facebook that the full extent of the damage wasn't immediately known.

"Our hearts go out in support to all those experiencing loss as a result of tonight's fire," the business said. "We have immense gratitude for Portland's fire, police, and emergency services; without their skill and courage, the toll would certainly have been worse."

Chatman, citing air quality concerns, said area residents should stay inside and shut their windows and doors.

The Portland Water Bureau said it received reports of discolored water in the area of the fire. The discoloration is natural and doesn't present any known health risks, according to the bureau.

Pacific Power said electricity was shut down for over 12,000 customers. The utility had restored electricity for 11,700 customers, as of about 9 p.m., and was working on restoring power for the remaining customers.

The American Red Cross was opening a disaster resource center at Mannahouse, a non-denominational Christian church at 9200 N.E. Fremont St. Road closures include 82nd Avenue from Jonesmore to Siskiyou streets.

Portland Fire & Rescue urged anyone who has information about what may have caused the fire to call 503-823-4636.

The Portland Tribune

Your City Hall: Many concerned about Portland's future, survey finds

*By Jim Redden
August 27, 2019*

Survey finds residents are evenly split between those who feel positive about the city's future and those who do not, with 45% agreeing and disagreeing. Long-term and African American residents are more likely to be dissatisfied.

WHAT IS HAPPENING? Portland has released a new survey that shows many residents are worried about the future of the city and cite homelessness, the lack of affordable housing and congestion among their top concerns. The dissatisfaction is greatest in minority communities and among the disabled.

WHO CONDUCTED THE SURVEY? The 2019 Portland Insights Survey was the first conducted by the City Budget Office. It replaced the annual Community Survey conducted by the City Auditor's Office for 26 years. The new survey was designed to better help city leaders understand Portlanders' priorities and recommendations for improvements to services. It also was the first to hire multilingual community members to solicit feedback by canvassing members of historically underrepresented communities.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR FINDINGS? A majority of respondents are satisfied with Portland today as a place to live, raise children, work or go to school, or to be part of a community. But they express the following concerns:

- Residents are evenly split between those who feel positive about the city's future and those who do not, with 45% agreeing and disagreeing. Long-term and African American residents are more likely to be dissatisfied.
- Residents are evenly split between those who agreed they can find jobs sufficient to support themselves and their families, and those who disagreed. Those with disabilities report having more difficulty finding jobs that pay enough to support them and their families.
- Homelessness is perceived as the top challenge facing Portland. This perspective was shared across every race and age group. In all, 88% of respondents are dissatisfied with the city's response to homelessness, the highest level of dissatisfaction with any of the questions included in the survey.
- More than 40% of respondents in every race and residency length group identified the high cost of living as a top challenge facing Portland. They chose increasing housing affordability and addressing homelessness as a top budget priority.
- Residents are evenly split over whether Portland is making progress on becoming a city in which a person's outcomes are not based on their race; with 40% agreeing and disagreeing. African Americans were most likely to disagree, followed by those who identified as two or more races. Hispanic and white respondents gave similar responses, and Asians were more likely than others to agree.

The survey also includes responses to questions about specific bureaus with the results broken down by areas of the city. Those in East Portland tend to be the least satisfied with city services.

WHAT COMES NEXT? The budget office will present to the City Council on Wednesday, Sept. 18, a report on the survey, along with recommendations. The council is expected to consider the findings and recommendations when writing and approving the budget for the next fiscal year, which starts July 1, 2020.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE? Find this article online at PortlandTribune.com for a link to the full 84-page survey, or go to www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/article/740406.

Homeless facility set to open as need rises

*By Jim Redden
August 26, 2019*

Navigation Center offers shelter, along with support services for moving people off the streets and into permanent housing

Portland's newest homeless service facility is scheduled to open one week after a new report revealed the number of people without permanent housing in the region is much larger than previously estimated.

The new Portland State University report found that 38,000 people in the region were homeless for some part of 2017. That compares to 5,700 people who were counted as homeless during a federally mandated survey on one night that year.

The founders of Oregon Harbor of Hope said they are not surprised the new figure was so high. The nonprofit organization built the new Navigation Center and homeless shelter that was set to open just north of the Broadway Bridge on Northwest Naito Parkway on Tuesday, Aug. 27. They commissioned an earlier study by PSU students that estimated 26,000 people in the region were homeless for some part of 2016.

"We've all seen the real number now. We all knew it was larger than the government figure," Harbor of Hope founder Homer Williams, a prominent local developer, said at a press conference at the new facility on the morning of Monday, Aug. 26.

The PSU report and study both use a broader definition of homelessness than the single-night Point-in-Time count required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. That count only includes adults found living outdoors, in emergency shelters, and in transitional housing. The PSU report and study cover an entire year, and include children and adults doubled up in other peoples' homes, "couch surfing" with friends, living in cars or motels, etc.

Don Mazziotti, one of Harbor of Hope's directors, said he believes the homeless population will increase even more in coming years, in part because of the aging population. Many baby boomers have not saved nearly enough for retirement, and more and more destitute older people already are showing up at emergency shelters or can be found living on the streets.

Also speaking at the press conference were Columbia Sportswear President and CEO Tim Boyle, a major contributor; Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler; Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury; and George Devendorf, executive director of Transition Projects, the nonprofit organization that will operate the facility.

Wheeler called the facility an innovative public-private partnership that will help homeless people transition into permanent housing. He acknowledged that Portlanders are frustrated by the lack of apparent progress reducing homelessness, and promised to call for new partnerships and collaborations in coming weeks. A new survey released by the City Budget Office found 88% of

Portlanders are disappointed with government's response to the homeless crisis (see Your City Hall, page A5).

The 9,700-square-foot Navigation Center is designed to house up to 100 people at a time who will receive on-site medical, mental health and placement services. As many as 300 people are expected to pass through it each year.

Mazziotti said the region needs 10 more facilities like it to begin to meet the actual need — in addition to home-sharing services, more emergency shelters, more government-regulated affordable housing and more market rate housing. His organization also is funding trucks bringing portable showers and laundry facilities to the homeless, and will announce other projects in the near future.

The PSU report agrees that many more programs, facility and housing projects are needed. That is why it estimated the cost of serving all of the homeless people for 10 years at up to \$4.1 billion, many times more than all governments in the region currently are spending.

In comparison, the one-year budget of the Joint Office of Homeless Services — funded by Portland and Multnomah County — is only \$70 million. That is the largest single source of homeless prevention and service funding in the region.

The homeless services office opened a 120-bed shelter for woman and couples on Southeast Foster Road near 61st Avenue on Aug. 15. It is one of several new shelters that have doubled shelter capacity in recent years. More are in the works.

Plans for the Navigation Center and shelter were first announced in April 2018. The final cost was \$3.5 million, with Boyle and his wife, Mary, contributing \$3 million and the rest coming from other private contributions. An additional \$600,000 was spent for environmental remediation, paid for by a city loan and a state grant. Portland and Multnomah County have agreed to pay \$1 million of the operating costs of project.

The project, so far, has survived several legal and administrative challenges. Portland's Design Commission rejected a challenge by a nearby resident who complained the structure did not meet city design standards for the area.

Developer Jim Winkler, who owns an adjacent property, challenged the proposed cleanup plan approved by the city before the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality as inadequate. When DEQ upheld the plan, he appealed it to the Oregon Court of Appeals, which subsequently ruled he lacked standing.

Winkler also challenged the building permit issued by the Bureau of Development Services at the state Land Use Board of Appeals, which ruled it lacks jurisdiction and transferred the case to Multnomah County Circuit Court. Winkler currently is appealing both decisions.

Winkler said he supports helping the homeless and praises Williams for his commitment to the cause. But Winkler also said he believes there should have been more process and transparency on several of the decision that allowed the project to proceed.

OPB

Did Portland's 'Shop. Eat. Play' Campaign Make Up For Protest Losses?

*By Rebecca Ellis
August 26, 2019*

The Portland mayor's office says shoppers appeared to take up the city on its call to patronize downtown businesses over the weekend, following political protests the preceding weekend that caused stores to suffer while many a would-be-customer stayed home.

"We only have anecdotal information, but, as of now, business owners have reported very high numbers," said Jennifer Arguinzoni, the Mayor's Director of External Affairs.

As part of the mayor's 'Shop. Eat. Play' campaign on Saturday, the city offered free parking in metered spots downtown, as well as in all SmartPark garages. Portland Streetcar and the BIKETOWN bikeshare program offered free rides throughout the day.

Members of the Portland Business Alliance, which helped with the promotion, said they're still working to track down exactly how successful the freebies were at driving foot traffic downtown.

But the alliance's director of downtown retail programs Lisa Frisch said, after chatting with retailers on Saturday and Sunday, she believes businesses got a lift — though not one large enough to make them forget about their losses the prior weekend.

"It's a small lift over last year's same-day business," she said. "But the lift was not enough to overcome the losses from the protest day."

The business alliance has estimated the Aug. 17 demonstrations cost the city \$3 million.

Rachel Fowler, an aromatherapist who sells essential oil products at the Portland Saturday Market downtown, said the protests devastated many of the stalls she's surrounded by, with shop-owners each losing out on hundreds of dollars in business. This weekend, she said, was a welcome return to normalcy with the typical bustling crowds.

"I wouldn't say [the promotion] completely made up for it. Because we lost quite a bit last Saturday," she said. "I think it went back to what we had this past summer."

Catherine Odell, a children's book illustrator, said she "didn't feel comfortable" setting up her stall at the Saturday Market while the protests were going on, and so lost out on a day of sales at the height of tourist season. She said most of the people she chats with at the market made the same decision

Odell says the past weekend's campaign didn't make any financial difference. Her stall of illustrations saw the foot traffic she would expect from a Saturday in August. But she says there was a notable "lightness in the air."

"It was a nice gesture. I know the vendors appreciated it," she said. "There was a celebratory vibe when we went to the parking lot after work."

Privately-Funded Homeless Shelter Opens In Portland Pearl District

By Amelia Templeton

August 26, 2019

A new navigation center for people who are chronically homeless is opening this week in Portland's Pearl District.

The facility, called the River District Navigation Center, will be open day and night with bunkbeds, meals, showers, and a laundry area for up to 100 men and women, along with a small outdoor courtyard.

It was built with a roughly \$3 million donation from Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle and his wife, Mary Boyle, – the largest-ever single contribution to Portland and Multnomah County's shelter system, according to local officials.

Three years ago, Pearl District developer Homer Williams founded the nonprofit Oregon Harbor of Hope to try to bring a navigation center to Portland after visiting a privately-funded shelter and service center in Texas.

“Harbor of Hope shows what is possible when the private sector joins with our nonprofit organizations and the city to make real progress in the fight against homelessness,” said Mayor Ted Wheeler as the center opened Monday.

Portland and Multnomah County's Joint Office for Homeless Services is providing more than \$1 million in annual funding to operate the shelter, which will be run by the nonprofit Transition Projects. The city's development agency Prosper Portland gave Harbor of Hope use of the municipal property the shelter sits on for the next five years.

The navigation center won't add significantly to the number of shelter beds citywide – it's opening as other temporary facilities funded through the Joint Office are closing – but supporters say it will help the city coordinate its approach to helping chronically homeless people with multiple needs access housing.

Beds in the center will be available by referral only. A team of outreach workers will visit campsites and will work with the Portland Police Bureau's neighborhood response teams to identify people to refer to the shelter.

They'll give priority to people over 55, veterans and those with disabilities. Twenty beds will be reserved for homeless people with ongoing medical needs being discharged from local hospitals, and the facility includes a one-room health clinic that will be run by the nonprofit Central City Concern.

Stays at the navigation center will be limited to 90 days, with a focus on getting people into other programs or housing in that time.

“That's going to be adjusted based on individual circumstances, but we really want to motivate people to move forward,” said Paul Susi, the navigation center's manager.

The shelter will be a low barrier, meaning sobriety is not a requirement – though residents will be prohibited from bringing any drugs, alcohol or paraphernalia to the site. Pets will be allowed in carriers or on bunks on a case-by-case basis.

Homeless residents have yet to move in – the facility is waiting on a few inspections and an order of chairs from Amazon – but on Monday, city officials and curious neighbors were invited to tour the building.

“It’s crisp, clean seems to be well designed,” said Stephen Young, a resident of a nearby condominium. “I’m in support of the city experimenting with solutions to homelessness.”

“I’m excited,” said Bethanie Grabow, a renter in the neighborhood for the past four years.

Grabow says some of her neighbors are concerned that the center will attract more homeless people to the neighborhood.

“But I think they’re already here – having a place for them to go and get help is a good thing,” she said.

The longterm fate of the navigation center is uncertain. The land it sits on belongs to Prosper Portland and is part of a much larger site, known as the Broadway Corridor, which the agency is actively planning to re-develop.

The site is an old rail yard and was contaminated with pollutants. Soil remediation work added to cost overruns for the project, and a neighboring landowner filed a legal challenge questioning whether Harbor of Hope’s soil clean-up plan was adequate.

Representatives for Wheeler and Harbor of Hope said they would be open to extending the navigation center’s 5-year lease – if it didn’t interfere with the long-term redevelopment plans for the site.

“If the housing emergency were to be continued during that time, then obviously we would be interested in extending the life of the lease. That’s subject to future negotiations that are unpredictable,” said Don Mazziotti, the Director of Harbor of Hope.

Mazziotti said Harbor of Hope is interested in working with other neighborhoods in Portland to open more navigation centers – and also hopes to encourage the local business community to dedicate more of its money, time and expertise to solutions to homelessness.