

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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## Broadway Corridor breakthrough

The 12-block public-private project on the former post office site will use union labor.

By Don McIntosh

Three minutes before a planned July 20 meeting with Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, negotiations over a new neighborhood called the Broadway Corridor ended with the Zoom equivalent of a handshake. After a year of talks, the City's development agency Prosper Portland, Denver developer Continuum Partners, and a union-community alliance called the Healthy Communities Coalition cleared the final hurdles to reach a wide-ranging agreement to guarantee living wage jobs for workers and provide opportunities for women and minorities.

The development centers on the 12-block former U.S. Postal Service (USPS) mail processing plant that was bought by the City of Portland in 2016. If approved as expected by Prosper Portland and Portland City Council, the community benefits agreement (CBA) will require that all con-

struction work on the site, public or private, pay the state-determined prevailing wage. Only contractors that provide full-family health benefits can bid, though that requirement can be waived for state-certified women- and minority-owned contractors bidding on less than \$1 million of work. Union and community groups will help oversee compliance with commitments by contractors to employ women and minorities as apprentice and journeymen construction workers. Continuum has also committed to negotiate a project labor agreement (PLA) once it has selected its general contractor, assuring that it will use union construction labor on the project, with limited exceptions. The deal also commits to respecting union rights for janitors and security guards on the properties once the project is complete.

Neither side is releasing full details yet, but the CBA will be presented to the Prosper Portland board Aug. 12.

Early work on the site has already begun in preparation for demolition.

## Sheet Metal union restructures

The new SMART Northwest Regional Council covers 9,500 members in five locals in seven states.

By Don McIntosh

Five Sheet Metal union locals across the Northwestern United States have been reorganized into a new regional council, headquartered in Everett, Washington. Under the reorganization, members will elect delegates to the regional council, and local business managers and staff will be appointed and paid by the regional council. The change came at the direction of the locals' parent organization, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART).

SMART Northwest Regional Council is the union's second regional council, following the formation of the Southwest Gulf

Coast Regional Council, a four-local council headquartered in San Antonio. Several other building trades unions—including Laborers and Carpenters—have also moved toward a greater role for regional councils in recent years.

SMART Northwest Regional Council became official June 1, 2020. It includes Locals 16, 23, 55, 66, and 103, covering members in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska. All told, it brings together about 9,500 active members. Most are in construction, but more than 1,000 work in production at manufacturing facilities and shipyards. The five locals employ roughly 50 business representatives, organizers, and office staff at more than a dozen

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## Reopening schools: What do teachers think?

Is it possible for schools to reopen safely? Can online education substitute for in-person instruction? As school districts debated those questions and ultimately pushed back in-person reopening to at least November, the Labor Press turned to Madison High School English teacher Elizabeth Thiel, the newly elected president of Portland Association of Teachers (PAT), for answers.

**What was PAT members' reaction to the plan to reopen at half capacity?** The vast majority of our members believe that the best and only option is online, because of safety. Nobody wants to be back in classrooms with students more than teachers. Distance learning is not what we want. It is absolutely not the best educational model. It's not what we were trained to

"So many of our teachers have contacted me to say, 'I feel like I'm being asked to play Russian roulette with my life or with my immunocompromised child's life.'"

— PAT president Elizabeth Thiel



do, and it's not how we best connect with our students. But we have a responsibility for our students' safety as well as our workers' safety and the safety of all our family members in the community. Talking with our superintendent, it seems more and more clear that the hybrid model would not be sufficient to keep people safe. Part of it is we don't have answers to basic questions, like so many of our classrooms don't have good

ventilation. We don't have operable windows in all of our classroom. We don't have touch-less sinks; in fact most schools have sinks where you have to hold the faucet with one hand in order to put the other hand under the water or it automatically springs back. So even washing hands is tricky in our schools. And then you think about things like fire drills, earthquake drills,

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## Introducing IUPAT Local 101

By Don McIntosh

For the first time since their craft was born 70 years ago, Portland-area drywall finishers in Oregon and Southwest Washington have their own union local: On June 1 the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) chartered Local 101 as the union for drywall finishers.

Since at least 1953, when drywall started being widely used in construction instead of lathe and plaster, local drywall finishers had been part of Portland-headquartered Painters Local 10. But their numbers have been growing, and drywall finishers wanted their own local. Drywall finishers within Painters Local 300 of Seattle made a similar move, forming Local 364. Meetings to talk about forming a local were the best-attended ever, says Kirk Malcom, a drywall finisher and 24-year union member who was appointed by IUPAT District Council 5 to be Local 101's business representative.

"There's a sense of pride

with crafts that have their own locals," Malcom said. "Members had seen the success of Seattle, and Portland has grown significantly."

Drywall finishers tape the joints between pieces of drywall, fill seams and holes with compound, and add textures and finishes. It's a skilled trade, and the most skilled workers are on the union side of the industry.

"If it's going to be a real showpiece, they hire a union contractor," Malcom said. "Often, we go in and fix nonunion work."

The new Local 101 has 454 members. They work for 33 signatory contractors, including 12 companies that belong to the employer group Associated Wall and Ceiling Contractors of Oregon and Southwest Washington (AWCCO).

And they earn good money. Under their master agreement between AWCCO, journeyman drywall finishers make



**TOOLS OF THE TRADE:** Drywall Finishers Local 101 member Robert Hewitt, an employee of Fred Shearer and Sons, handles what members of the trade call a "bazooka"—an automatic taper that applies joint compound and tape to drywall seams.

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