

# City Council authorizes use of Sears Armory for emergency operations

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Don Snedecor  
The Southwest Portland Post

Portland City Council voted 4-1 on May 24 to authorize the use of the Sergeant First Class Jerome Sears Army Reserve Center in the Multnomah neighborhood as an operations center. This operations center will ensure the City is able to effectively respond to emergencies on the west side of the Willamette River.

"Council's approval of the Sears Center for emergency operations is a positive step towards addressing a compelling safety need for Portlanders," said Mayor Sam Adams. "Currently, no public works emergency vehicles, equipment or supplies are located on the west side of the Willamette, leaving Portland at risk during a significant event. Creating an emergency operations center at this location will change that."

The Sears Center, located in Southwest Portland at 2730 SW Multnomah Blvd, was previously identified by the U.S. Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure process as surplus property.

The City subsequently received a public benefit conveyance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency authorizing the no-cost transfer of the property for use as an emergency operations facility.

"We know Portland is vulnerable to earthquakes, winter weather and other natural disasters. The use of the Sears facility as an emergency center will

enhance the City's overall capabilities and enable a more timely and effective response to emergencies," said Carmen Merlo, Director of the Portland Office of Emergency Management.

After an extensive public engagement process in 2007 and 2008, Council originally recommended the redevelopment of the site for a mixed income, rental and ownership housing development.

However, after performing due diligence, the City determined the Portland Housing Bureau did not have the necessary capital to adequately fund the project.

Additional outreach was performed by the City in January and February 2011 to the Multnomah Neighborhood Association to affirm the community's support for the site as an emergency operations center.

But according to Moses Ross, chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, this option is not without its critics.

"Concerns and potential site usage issues were raised that identified unacceptable use of the site that are not in the neighborhood's best interest," said Ross.

"These issues surround the potential for daily maintenance operations to be scheduled from the site that would generate excessive noise to a predominantly residential area."

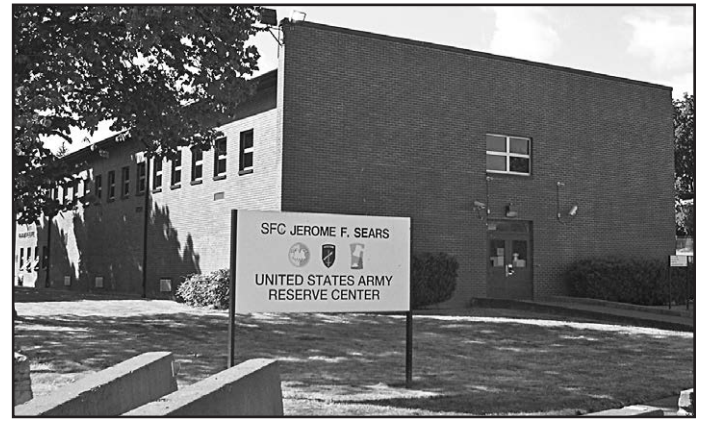
"General maintenance or staging operations on the site are considered by the neighborhood as unacceptable and do not fit in with the neighborhood."

"Usages beyond emergency support do not meet the criteria or the benefits intended by the Army for relinquishing the property and are not supported by

the neighborhood."

This was re-enforced by a motion that the neighborhood only supports this property use type if it is limited to emergency use. This motion passed with unanimous vote.

With Council's approval May 24 of the reuse of the site, the City will submit a revised reuse master plan to the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, amend-



(Post file photo by Don Snedecor)

ing the designated use of the facility from affordable housing to emergency operations.



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