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Balancing act

*Ted Wheeler wants to talk
about urban renewal areas.
Here's why you should listen.*



PHOTO BY KEN HAWKINS WWW.KENHAWKINS.COM

Multnomah County Chairman Ted Wheeler says local government, including Multnomah County, cannot survive under current urban renewal formulas.

BY JOANNE ZUHL
STAFF WRITER

From his corner office on the sixth floor of the Multnomah County building, County Chairman Ted Wheeler has a panoramic view of a lot of money; looking west is downtown Portland and the Pearl District, and looking north, the Interstate corridor and the Northeast renaissance. The city grows all around him.

Which makes dealing with a \$46 million budget shortfall all the more bitter.

For the ninth year in a row, Multnomah County has been defunding — cutting public safety and health services — in order to adjust to a regressive tax formula for urban renewal.

Do not avert your eyes. Yes, the subjects of urban renewal areas and tax increment financing make for a powerful sedative, but they have begun to light fires under politicians' and taxpayers' feet. They are workhorses in local development plans, including a 30 percent dedication of those funds toward affordable housing. It's how tax dollars move in this town, for better or worse.

The urban renewal construct — which draws an increment of property tax dollars as a funding incentive for projects in "blighted" areas — most recently flared up over the Major League Soccer deal. That proposal sought to draw urban renewal funds to build a minor league baseball stadium in Lents. It was later withdrawn, with Wheeler being

the stony messenger decrying the use of such funds for such a project, and the consequences in depleting a property tax base that supports education, health care and safety programs in the most populated county in Oregon.

Joanne Zuhl: *In your opinion, do you think the city has responsibly used urban renewal areas to this point?*

Ted Wheeler: I support urban development, I support job creation, I support the creation of urban renewal areas around truly blighted areas

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Precinct shuffle brings new faces, attitudes into Southeast

BY AMANDA WALDROUPE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

One month since the Portland Police Bureau's June 11 consolidation of inner southeast Portland into Central Precinct, no one is quite sure what lasting effect the consolidation will have on policing in inner southeast Portland.

"In terms of service delivery, there's no change," says Central Precinct Captain Mark Kruger.

Officers formerly reporting to Southeast Precinct are continuing to patrol the same geographic area they patrolled before the consolidation, but they are now part of Central Precinct.

That is a relief to the neighborhood advocates, who will take as much time as needed to praise their neighborhood officers for the work they do in the largely residential area comprising inner southeast Portland. (The boundaries are the

Willamette River, Burnside Avenue, 39th Avenue and the Multnomah/Clackamas county line.)

"We have worked really hard to build up relationships," says Valerie Chapman, the pastoral administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Church. "Officers know who people are and who we are, and what people need."

But the consolidation presents another challenge to St. Francis, which provides lunch and a day center for the homeless: How to work with the police as they begin to more strictly enforce the city's anti-camping and no-structures ordinances, sweeping homeless people and their camps.

Seasonal sweeps are nothing new to the St. Francis area, which has long been known as a gathering place for homeless people. Camps swell in the early summer and Rose Festival time, and complaints from residents and businesses grow, pressuring the police to respond.

Officer Mike Castlio, who has patrolled the

Buckman neighborhood around St. Francis for the past 25 years, says that Southeast Precinct police would encourage campers to have their tents and camps taken down before businesses opened, and to make an effort to have a low impact on the area around them. Describing the method as "sporadic," Castlio said that Southeast Precinct officers only dealt with camping when complaints mounted.

"Police in Southeast have been fairly patient

"Southeast hadn't been taking any consistent action regarding whether or not (tents are) allowed. Southeast has, over time, chosen to do it one fashion, and Central Precinct has been doing it slightly differently."

— CAPT. MARK KRUGER
PORTLAND CENTRAL PRECINCT

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