

Fighting Displacement

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"I'm a disabled 58 year old man who depends on electricity to charge my wheelchair, my nebulizer, which is a breathing treatment, and a CPAP machine. Being homeless with not electricity is going to cause me to die," resident Eddie Kirk Jones, who is wheelchair bound, told the Portland Observer.

Jones has a neurological condition that mimics Lou Gerick's disease—he shakes and has immobility in the right side of his body.

Jones and his wife of 27 years live off a \$750 per month income, he said, and has paid over \$30,000 at the park over the years for the mobile home he owns.

Other residents at Cedar Shade, which has 76 units, echoed Jones' fears.

"It's going to be a disaster...I don't know where I would go," said Martina Martinez, 53, who is a caretaker originally from Mexico and has been living in the park for over five years. She pays \$450 per month and lives with a roommate.

"In the first place, we'd just be left without a home. Right now, we have a stable, safe place to live. This is place where we can afford it and we like living in this area," added Griselda Garza, who also has four children and two grandchildren that live at the park. She's been living at the park for two years.

Proponents say the ordinance is designed to not be a financial detriment to park owners, some of whom have cited lost potential income as one reason they're opposed to it.

"I don't think we're trying to hamper the park owners. Some of these parks currently have non-conforming zoning on them. And so we're changing that to make them

conforming, make them an allowed use in the zone that they have, which will make it easier for them to re-invest in their parks," Tom Armstrong, supervising planner for the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the city's agency that researched and drafted the proposal, told the Portland Observer.

Park owners whose property does not comply with current zoning would have to go through a "non-conforming situation review" in order to be allowed to make improvements or do developments on their site, Armstrong explained.

The re-zoning also offers an increased density of the park, which allows for more tenants. Park owners will also be able to transfer unused development rights from one of their parks to another site, or sell it.

The proposal would create a new residential dwelling zone to allow 22 units per acre and is expected to bolster allowable units in current parks by up to 33 percent.

Research has shown that park owners will have continued economic benefit after the re-zoning goes into effect, Mary Kyle McCurdy, the deputy director and staff attorney of 1,000 Friends of Oregon, a state-wide land use non-profit that helped develop the proposal after Living Cully reached out to them, told the Portland Observer.

She added that a city study of mobile manufactured home parks in their current state showed that they are currently generating income for park owners. The parks' existing value, as well as the re-zoning benefits of allowed higher tenant density and transferable development rights should help mitigate claims against the city that park owners are getting short-changed, McCurdy added.

In spite of these measures, attorney John Dilorenzo, who lobbies for landlords for David Wright Attorneys, told the Portland



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Cameron Herrington, anti-displacement coordinator for the non-profit Living Cully neighborhood group, speaks with a Cedar Shade Mobile Home Park resident about plans to help keep the park and others in the city from being re-developed, protecting existing low-income housing.

Observer that, should the re-zoning pass, park owners will still file claims against the city. If park owners can prove the re-zoning resulted in a loss of potential income, they could make a claim under a state law, called Measure 49, which allows individuals to either receive compensation from the city or have the new zoning ordinance waived for their property.

Armstrong said it's hard to predict what will result from those claims being filed.

"The Measure 49 claims process is complex, and it's a on a case-by-case basis. We expect some claims, but it's unclear how those claims will result in the long run."

Herrington said he's not surprised many park owners oppose the rezoning, but

stresses the initiative should be a high priority in city plagued by, what is for many, unattainably high housing prices.

"For us, it comes down to a political question of 'what's our priority?' Is it preserving the homes of 3,000 families that can't afford anywhere else to live? Or is it defending the interest of a couple dozen wealthy folks who've been collecting rent for years from those 3,000 families? And under the new zoning code they can continue to do that and will continue to do that."

The City Council hearing and vote on the proposed new zoning code is scheduled for Aug. 22 at 2 p.m. at City Hall, downtown.



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08/21/18 Urban League of Portland 11:45am-1:30pm
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08/23/18 St. Johns Portland Library 1:15pm – 3:00pm
7510 N Charleston Ave Portland, OR Rm Capacity 22

08/28/18 Central Portland Library (Downtown) 12:45pm-3:00pm
801 SW 10th Ave Rm Capacity 120

08/30/18 Central City Concern (OTRC) 11:45am-2:30pm
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Pending Locations, Dates and Times: North Portland Library (512 N Killingsworth St); Rockwood Library (17917 SE Stark St); Northwest Portland Library (2300 NW Thurman St)

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