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Emergency room doctor Sharon Meieran has been diagnosing Multnomah County's problems for years, and she's eager to do something about them.

The plan

Only one county chair candidate, Sharon Meieran, has one

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

Contenders for leadership positions in troubled institutions might be expected to have a plan—a diagnosis of past failures, a theory as to how things should work and the critical steps needed to get there.

Multnomah County chair candidate Sharon Meieran has been making plans to reverse the county's wasteful, ineffective and unpopular approach to homelessness, addiction and chronic mental illness since her first term as a county commissioner 10 years ago. She brought potential partners together, drafted documents and tried to push an evidence-based strategy up hill, all to little effect.

Meieran is running for the county's top seat based on a conviction that—in a system in which the chair administers all city departments and controls the commission's agenda—it's the only

way to bring about the necessary structural change.

"My goal is to fix Multnomah County," she said, "and I need to be chair to do it."

Of the three vying for the position, only Meieran has produced a plan. Julia Brim-Edwards and Shannon Singleton have touted their abilities and achievements without explaining why county programs have gone awry or outlining the changes needed to fix them.

By contrast, Meieran has been disseminating a 23-page plan, including a county organizational chart so labyrinthine that even a novice can see why the county can't get out of its own way.

"I'm flummoxed. Frankly, I would have preferred not to run for office in the first place, but I knew the county needed a plan," Meieran said in an exclusive interview with the

Continued on page 6

Portland pays for wrong turn in 2011

Centennial Mills could have included James Beard Market, local businesses

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

Fifteen years ago, Portland's development agency fumbled a prime opportunity to redevelop the five-acre Centennial Mills site. Nothing as promising ever arose again.

The vision of California-based developer Shaheen Sadeghi and his LAB Holding LLC was called SEED, for social entrepreneurship, engagement and development. It was selected over two other out-of-state contenders in 2008 and was moving toward a final development agreement.

His team included the architect behind Minneapolis' Mill City Museum, the ruins of a 19th century mill in the heart of the city that became the magnet for a wider urban renaissance.

"Our winning design was not crafted in isolation; it evolved through an extensive series of community and neighborhood meetings," Sadeghi said.

The Pearl District Neighborhood Association was fully on board.

But Prosper Portland, then known as the Portland Development Commission, drastically changed the terms on Sadeghi at the eleventh hour. Instead of a winning design preserving the array of historic mill structures amid local food vendors and wide



Shaheen Sadeghi was ready to turn Centennial Mills into a sprawling public attraction reflecting its original purpose—food. Fifteen years after Prosper Portland said no, nothing remains of the vision or the buildings.

Continued on page 14

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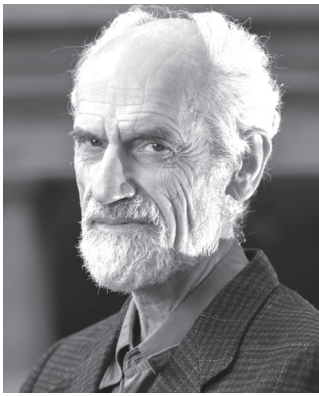
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On diversity and power

Some would have us believe that the current Portland City Council is strong on diversity. Half of the 12 are women, five are defined as people of color and three identify as LGBTQ+.

If that’s how we measure diversity, we may lead the nation. But is that the kind of diversity that matters most in a democracy?

Biodiversity, which still means what it did when I was in school, is about a wide range of species, genes and habitats coexisting to the benefit of the entire ecosystem. Domination by a single element of the biosphere weakens the whole, undermining its resiliency and capacity to adapt to change.

The “diversity” of this council goes in the opposite direction, a so-called progressive caucus of six trying to dominate through cunning, cliquishness and all means necessary. Rather than considering a variety of viewpoints, it devolves into us-versus-them showdowns. In the first year under this cohort, it took four hours and 10 votes to elect a chair. This year, the process stretched to three days and 13 votes. With that revealing annual chore behind it, the council often deadlocked 6-6 along the same lines on other items of business.

There’s a saying that goes: The only thing better than finding a solution is having someone else to blame for the problem.

This is at heart a power struggle between a unified ideological group known as Peacock—guided by four members of the Democratic Socialists of America—and a more diverse remainder coalescing in defense. The result is a rigid and fragile body playing brinkmanship instead of taking care of the business of the city.

Diversity of thought has no place in DSA’s world. As in war, unifying the troops and enforcing discipline becomes paramount.

The socialists on the council understand this. A Portland DSA questionnaire outlined expectations of candidates they endorse:

- Do you agree with the DSA National platform? Will you fight for the demands in the platform?
- Will you pledge to form a Socialist Caucus with

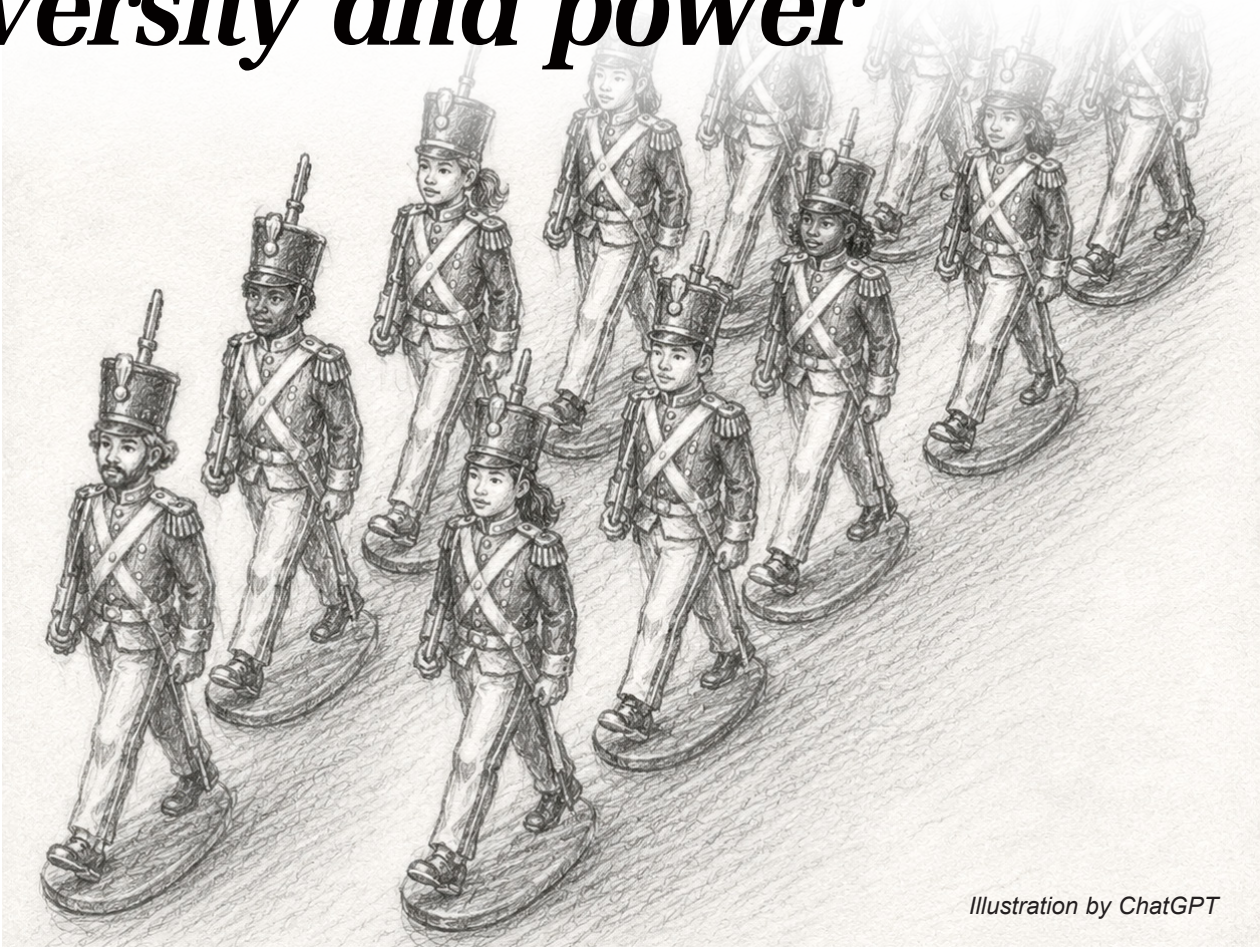


Illustration by ChatGPT

other DSA-endorsed candidates?

DSA-backed council members are not free to consider better ideas or adapt to changing circumstances. They are to be loyal foot soldiers who accept DSA ideology out of hand.

The tightly controlled cabal holding half the seats on the Portland City Council—none of whom would even have been serious candidates before charter reform—understands how it attained disproportionate power. If it doesn’t, DSA leaders will remind them. In a system requiring only 25% of the votes to win, the organization perfected a campaign strategy directed toward hardcore believers rather than a broad message acceptable to a majority of voters.

This path does not instill victors with a deep faith in the general public or in mainstream voters unattuned to the logistics of the new electoral system. This path does not need to waste time persuading the masses who do not already agree with their assessment of capitalism’s fatal flaws. Neighborhood associations

are seen as tending to minor livability annoyances, matters unrelated to the exploitation of the working class.

DSA’s name includes “democratic” because so many socialist regimes around the globe in this century and the last have devolved into autocracies. But appropriating the term does not overcome the inherent authoritarianism in radical socialism’s core critique of society or its plan to remake it.

Last November, the Peacock bloc on council thought it had secretly lined up seven votes to cut funding for homeless camp sweeps. The gambit, made without public input and only five days warning, failed when the expected seventh vote fell through. The peak of DSA power may have passed at that juncture; after the election in November, we may know for sure.

Socialism is not a dirty word. It is an element in all modern governments. But socialism not rooted in respect for democracy—and a diversity of opinion—is not American. I don’t believe it is even Portlandian. ■

Readers Reply

Letters can be sent to: allan@nwexaminer.com or 1209 SW Sixth Ave., #303, Portland, OR 97204. Letters should be 300 words or fewer; include a name and a street of residence. Deadline: third Saturday of the month.

Horrificing plan for park

I am horrified at what our city is allowing to happen in Forest Park [“From the jaws of victory,” SEPTEMBER 2026]. I realize Portland General Electric’s plan is also just the beginning of a master plan using Forest Park for its purposes.

Besides going into the absolute illegality of what the city manager has declared after the City Council voted 12-0 not to allow PGE to use Forest Park land, I want to know who to contact and how in order to make my voice heard. I will definitely send an email to [City Administrator Raymond] Lee. Who else? The mayor?

Also, it would be wonderful if you could give us names and emails of people to contact in your paper. There are many of us who love this park who want to protest this action. Also, could you tell me if this is a “done deal” or is there time to protest this action?

Ann Kafoury
NW Culpepper Terrace

Editor’s note: A revised plan will almost certainly come before City Council again, when we will see if any of our District 4 councilors change their minds.

Olivia Clark, councilor.clark@portlandoregon.gov

Mitch Green, councilor.green@portlandoregon.gov

doregon.gov

Eric Zimmerman, councilor.zimmerman@portlandoregon.gov

Arson suspect at mill

What appears to have been arson at the old Centennial Mills warehouse has had far more fallout than any imagined possible. An entire neighborhood paralyzed; freight and travel transit stopped in its tracks (pun intended); and overall demoralization once again wrought by troublemakers, to be kind in my terminology.

The day before this fire erupted, I walked past the warehouse. Every tree lining the street was plastered with anti-ICE literature doxxing Stuart Lindquist as owner of the ICE detention center property, as well as Centennial Mills.

These posters were an anarchist call to action to prevent Lindquist properties from profiting off any restoration of Centennial Mills. It was obvious what this group had in mind: to destroy an old man’s legacy simply because he happened to lease to the federal General Services Administration long ago.

The evening of the fire, I retrieved four posters on trees outside the cordoned

Cont’d on page 5

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Members of the Northwest District Association Planning Committee were stunned to learn on Aug. 27 that long-time committee member and former chair Steve Pinger had died. Few knew that he had been ill although he had been living with congestive heart failure for 20 years. He was the most frequently quoted source in the NW Examiner, in part because he served in so many positions but also due to his singular ability to summarize the heart of an issue.

Steve Pinger



STEVEN S. PINGER, a Northwest District resident and community activist, died at home on Aug. 25. He was born at St. Vincent Hospital on Northwest Westover Road on July 25, 1952. He grew up in Raleigh Hills and attended Catlin Gabel School. He graduated from Beaverton High School in 1969 and studied architecture at the University of Oregon. With partners, he founded Twin Buttes Development in Eugene. In 1979, he returned to Portland, where he worked for several architecture firms before co-founding WPH Architecture in 1996. He served on the boards of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association and Northwest District Association, where he was on the Planning Committee for 20 years. He was a member of the Northwest Parking Stakeholders Advisory Committee and the Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center board. He coached Hill-side Soccer and helped lead a campaign to create a soccer field at Chapman Elementary School. He is survived by his wife Katharine L Sammons; children, Claire and Adrian; and sisters, Sharon Dowsett and Candace Smith.

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Craig Walker Kozak



Craig Walker Kozak, a popular local broadcaster with KGW radio and television for most of his 35-year broadcasting career, died July 22 at age 80. He was born on May 2, 1946, in Grand Island, Neb., and his family moved to Oregon, where he graduated in 1964 from Dallas High School and from Oregon State University in 1968.

He married Barbara Steele in 1968 and served in the National Guard from 1968 to 1974. He is survived by his wife, Barbara; son, Craig Jr., sisters, Connie Kozak and Chris Taylor; and six grandchildren. He was predeceased by his daughter, Karen Schmitt, in 2016.

Jane Wilkins

Jane Wilkins, who lived in the Northwest District for many years and worked as a realtor with Realty Group on Northwest Everett Street, died July 16 at age 99. Jane Hermann was born on June 17, 1927, in Oregon. She married Richard Wilkins; he died in 1997. They lived many years on Northwest Quimby Street. Mac Wilkins, gold medalist in the discus in the 1976 Olympics, is their son.

Eleanor Kingsley Johnson

Eleanor Kingsley Johnson, a longtime resident of Portland Heights, died July 13 at age 93. Eleanor Bates was born on June 13, 1933, in Ridgewood, N.J., and grew up in Portland, attending Ainsworth Elementary School, Lincoln High School and Catlin Gabel School. She studied at Mills College, Pomona College and American University, where she received a master’s degree in public health administration. She worked at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. She married Daniel Kingsley, and they raised six children. In 1992, she married Lee Johnson, and they lived in Portland before moving to Palm Springs, Calif. She is survived by her sons, Daniel Jr., Clay, Blake, Christopher and Reed; daughter, Elizabeth; 14 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Walter McMonies



Walter McMonies, a prominent investor in Northwest District historic buildings, including Trinity Place Apartments, where he also lived, died July 25 of complications of Parkinson’s disease at age 79. He was born on May 11, 1947, grew up in Lake Oswego and graduated from Catlin Gabel School. He received undergraduate and law degrees from Yale University. He moved to Portland in 1976 to practice law, focusing on real estate. He became an expert on seismic retrofits of masonry buildings and served on seismic advisory bodies at the city and state level. He served on the boards of the Oregon Environmental Council, Historic Preservation League, Restore Oregon and Oregon League of Conservation Voters. He was a member of the Multnomah Athletic Club and the Oregon Runners Club. He is survived by his wife, Maria Hall; son, Robert; daughters, Elinor Watts and Madeleine McMonies; and four grandchildren.



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Vincent DeLacy



Vincent DeLacy, a lifelong Northwest District resident, died on July 30 of cancer at age 67. He was born on Aug. 27, 1958, in Portland, graduating from Chapman Elementary School in 1973 and Lincoln High School in 1977. He earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature from Willamette University.

He worked as a software engineer and retired as an instructor at Vestas. He married Linda Patterson. He is survived by his wife, Linda; son, Peter; daughter, Kelsey; brothers, Paul Barton and James Kelly; and sister, Madonna.

Richard Burke

Richard Burke, who grew up in Portland Heights and later lived in Goose Hollow, died on July 8 at age 80. He was born on July 5, 1946, and attended Ainsworth Elementary School before graduating from Rainier High School in 1964. He served in the Army during the Vietnam War. He worked in The Oregonian pressroom until his retirement. He is survived by his sister, Jennifer Dudley.

Kathryn Belknap



Kathryn Belknap, who grew up in Portland Heights, died on July 31, at age 90. Kathryn Brieglieb was born on July 29, 1936, in Portland. She attended Ainsworth Elementary School and Lincoln High School and graduated from Whitman College with a bachelor’s degree in political science. She married Richard Child in 1962; he died in 1971. She later married William Barton and Lee Belknap, who both predeceased her. She was an active lifetime member of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and the Multnomah Athletic Club. She is survived by her children, Fred Child and Avon Hansen; and one grandchild.

Death Notices

THOMAS AUTZEN, 70, attended Lincoln High School.

LEZLEE DE LOOZE, 73, resident of Forest Heights.

ROSS McKECHNIE, 77, worked for Portland Terminal Railroad Co.

LEE HASCALL, 89, member of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral.

JACQUELINE WEST, 94, member of First Presbyterian Church.

ROBERT MASIN, 77, Multnomah Athletic Club member.

BEVERLY (CHUINARD) FORREST, 84, 1958 Lincoln High School graduate.

STEVE M. DUNN, 82, member of Mazamas.

GEORGE MINER, 79, 1964 Lincoln High School graduate.

KATHLEEN ROGOVOY, 83, Multnomah Athletic Club member.

DONNA (ZENOBIA) SAFFIR, 85, Northwest Heights resident.

CHARLES VICKERS, 46, 1998 Lincoln High School graduate.





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Centennial Mills was known as Crown Mills from 1910-1949, when it was sold to the Tacoma-based Centennial Flouring Mills.

area. I've done my civic duty by sharing this information with interested parties. Shouldn't we all be concerned about the endless anarchy in our town? I have no proof this group torched the mill (though I have my suspicions). Even if they did not start the fire, what gives them the right to torment a member of our community, as is their "direct action" modus operandi?

Karla Powell
NW 11th Ave.

Any chance of a park?

Having followed the Centennial Mills saga for about 20 years, I am one of the sentimentalists that would still love to see the Centennial Mills campus become a city park as was planned in the early 2000s. Do you see any chance that the developer who bought the property might be interested in getting out of the deal now that he faces a stiff demolition expense and more delays in moving ahead on his development plans?

I have to believe that someone such as Jordan Schnitzer, who pulled out of his plan about a decade ago, might be interested in getting back in on the action.

David L. Mitchell
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Sharon Meieran is full of ideas and enthusiasm to fix Multnomah County's dysfunctional approach to mental health, housing and social services.



"The plan" cont'd from page 1

NW Examiner.

"I used all of my efforts to work on a plan with the experts, created one and put it out there so that there can be public debate as the county is trying to figure out new leadership and its direction."

Meieran, an emergency room doctor and former attorney, has worked in arenas where the buck stops.

"I thought, apparently naively, that putting out a plan would get some reaction from someone, especially people who are saying they want to be the leaders of the county ... and I got nothing.

"And not only did I get nothing, whether it's critique, whether it's these things would be great or here's how I would tweak it. It doesn't have to be my plan. Like, what is anyone else's plan? There's not even an outline of anything. And so I honestly don't get it," she said.

In the county that never plans, signs of mismanagement abound. The chaos and garbage on the streets can't be missed. Numbers back up the images.

"Oregon is ranked 51st in the nation [counting Washington, D.C.] for prevalence of mental illness," she said. "Oregon is always near the bottom, and it's led by Multnomah County, which is supposed to be the local mental health authority for the region, providing the full complement of mental health services.

"The amount of money wasted is unimaginable, and it's unconscionable."

—Sharon Meieran

"So, we are the worst in mental illness and addiction. We have the worst overdose rates, worst addiction rates, worst deaths, especially of youth. Worst youth suicide rate."

The slide didn't begin yesterday.

"Ten years ago, we were in a crisis around homelessness and mental illness. That's why I ran to be at the county in the first place," she said.

Most county social services are provided indirectly through nonprofit organizations. Meieran said the contracts are renewed year after year without accountability or measurement of results.

"They don't hold any of the nonprofits they contract with to account," she said. "The county contracts with hundreds of nonprofits, and what I found out as I worked at the county—one of my biggest frustrations—I could never get just a list or itemized description of what they do. What are the goals? How do they tie into the bigger picture?"

The only reliable thing is the

steady flow of funding.

"They would just roll over the county's budget, fund these organizations, maybe tweak a little bit depending on how much money they had or didn't have," she said. "And that was how they did business."

Took a whistleblower

That loosey-goosey approach led to the scandalous collapse of Sunstone Way, a major shelter provider that misspent about \$3.6 million in public funds, much of it on extravagant trips and personal expenses. A criminal investigation is underway.

"It's only because someone blew the whistle that that came out," Meieran said. "But it is the tip of the iceberg. If anyone did an actual audit or review of all of the county's nonprofits ... they would be finding this everywhere. The amount of money wasted in that context is unimaginable, and it's unconscionable.

"The county should not have to rely on the courage and strength of one

whistleblower to come up with the reason for all of these things happening, or for telling us they happen."

That individual was Kate Fulton, the former finance manager for Sunstone. Fulton also made headlines last year as a whistleblower while she was a member of the Food Front Cooperative Grocery board.

Many others inside the system chose not to speak.

"Regularly, I would hear from people who would tell me the truth about what was happening at the county—failing in their contracts, how badly the county was operating," Meieran said.

"They were all validating each other, and validating what I would see. Then I would say, 'We need to tell the story.'"

The replies were predictable: "Oh no, I can't. I can't come out and say it, because it'll threaten our funding."

As a result, Meieran said, the county has received more money per capita for homeless services than any place in the country while "unsheltered homelessness has at least tripled."

Managers of county programs are fleeing in droves.

"The turnover at the county has been mind-boggling," Meieran said. "There have been seven health department directors in eight years, seven homeless

District 4 City Council Candidates Debate

Monday, October 5, 5 p.m.



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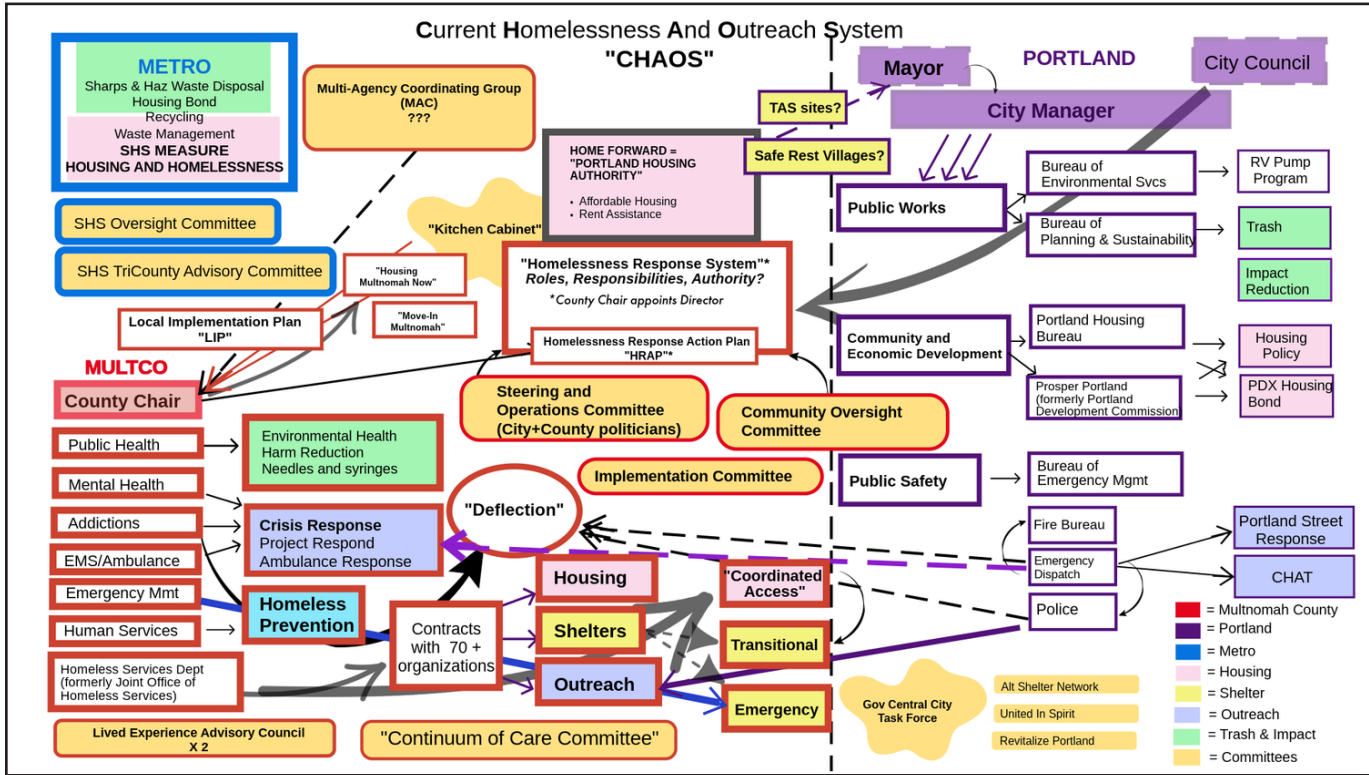
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Allan Classen, NW Examiner editor & publisher

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Sharon Meieran diagrammed the way decisions are currently made in Multnomah County to demonstrate why total restructuring is necessary.

services directors, six mental health directors, five community justice directors and a revolving door of other senior leaders. That kind of churn is devastating for an organization. No one can move forward with that.”

Budget last straw

Meieran had hoped that Brim-Edwards would carry the reform torch while she enjoyed retirement from public office. That changed when Brim-Edwards supported the county’s 2027 budget, which she saw as a continuation of piecemeal measures in defiance of fundamental change.

Meieran refused to support the budget in her last year on council, explaining: “We have tons of money. We literally couldn’t spend it all. What we lack is a plan and a system that actually accounts for where our money is going.”

She sees Brim-Edwards’ pivotal vote for hiring Nathaniel VerGow as homeless services director as just propping up the status quo.

“[VerGow] spent the past decade in senior leadership in Los Angeles’ homeless services system, a system now being dismantled after a federal lawsuit and independent review uncovered profound failures in oversight, accountability and financial management,” Meieran wrote on her website.

“Los Angeles has one of the worst records in the country,” she told the Examiner. “It was the subject of a federal lawsuit and a scathing independent review that found it had wasted billions of dollars.

“But that’s the person the county

brought in, that the chair selected and that three commissioners voted for.”

In an Oregonian interview, “VerGow repeated the county’s usual explanation for homelessness: high rents, not enough money,” she continued. “Addiction? Substance use disorder? Serious mental illness? Not one of those words appeared in his answers. That omission is glaring and defining.

“If the person running the county’s Homeless Services Department doesn’t name addiction and mental illness as central to the county’s unsheltered homelessness crisis, then there’s no reason to listen to anything else.

“Throughout the interview, Mr. VerGow reached for buzzwords like collaboration, efficiency, prevention, relationships, funding and better data for elected officials. While those words matter, they do not add up to a vision.”

After VerGow’s first three months on the job, “We are seeing nothing” in terms of progress or a plan, Meieran said.

What others say

Brim-Edwards, who served with Meieran on the county council for 18 months, often on the same side of issues, gave The Oregonian a stinging assessment of her former colleague:

“Sharon Meieran was a county commissioner for eight years and was ineffective at driving change or improvement,” Brim-Edwards wrote. “This place is less affordable, less safe and the problems bigger because of Meieran’s time on the commission.”

Meieran has not disguised her ineffectiveness as a commissioner—she



Sharon Meieran shared her analysis of the county’s woes with Friends of Couch Park last spring.

has in fact emphasized it, basing her campaign on a belief that only the chair can bring about the wholesale change needed. And if commissioners share equal blame for the body’s failures, a dose of it would fall on Brim-Edwards for her three-plus years at the table.

Others see Meieran as the one candidate with a plan that makes sense.

Richard Perkins, a former addict and adviser on recovery programs, trusts Meieran.

“Hopefully, Dr. Sharon Meieran, who has worked consistently over the last six years I have known her on a plan to address our behavioral health crisis,” Perkins said, “will finally get an opportunity to implement that plan, and we will have to put up with the status quo no longer.

“Unlike the other two candidates, she has been vocal about the problem and

worked with experts on a plan to address these issues. Is it perfect? Surely not. But it is light years ahead of any alternative. We are starting to see new drugs on the streets more dangerous than fentanyl. It is time to abandon the libertarian goals of letting people experiment with dangerous drugs and help those addicted escape their control and rejoin society.”

Examiner subscriber Marc Green claims no expertise in the recovery field but shares Perkins’ enthusiasm for Meieran.

“I read Sharon’s plan and admittedly did not fully understand it,” Green wrote. “The point for me is that she is a professional, she cares and she is ready to act on day one. I endorse her, and our county needs new blood, decision-makers who are results oriented.” ■

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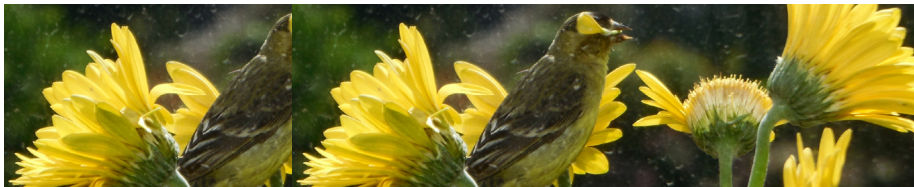
Better Half Sandwiches will open near the end of the month



Feli, a Spanish restaurant, has leased the corner space at Slabtown Square



Verdun Fine Chocolates moving out of the Pearl



NOBBY NEWS

Vol. 32, No. 9 "News You Can't Always Believe" SEPTEMBER 2026

Is there a draft in here?



Everyone at the Nob Hill Bar & Grill is talking about the draft these days. It seems to happen every year at this time, when the fall approaches and a chill is in the air.

NFL football fans know what's coming: The draft is about assembling fantasy football rosters before the

first games in September.

Fantasy football may not be real, but the Nobby regulars can feel it in their bones. Missing out on a top prospect could send a chill that may not go away until the spring.

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BETTER HALF SANDWICHES will open near the end of the month in the former Food Front Cooperative Grocery building at 2375 NW Thurman St. The deli, which will occupy one-quarter of the 8,000-square-foot building, was founded by husband-and-wife team Kelly Haarsager and Alan Oborn in North Portland in 2020.

Software giant **AUTODESK** is moving its Portland office from the Towne Storage Building on East Burnside Street to 2151 NW Savier St. in Slabtown.

RETROPOLITAN VINTAGE, 234 SW Broadway, a sprawling two-level vintage mall, opened Aug. 8 in an Art Deco building last home to the Paul Mitchell Beauty School.

JAKARTA BISTRO, an Indonesian restaurant at 1902 NW 24th Ave., is open weekends 11 a.m.-5 p.m., and Tuesday-Thursday 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

THE MULTNOMAH ATHLETIC CLUB leased the corner space at Sawbuck Apartments, 1795 SW Salmon St. "The space provides the club with additional flexibility to host events, meetings and other member activities," said communications manager Adam Linnman.

LUCILLE, a cocktail bar, will open on the ground floor of the Carson Apartments in Slabtown in the former home of Manzanita Wines.

Several businesses from the now-closed Lloyd Center have jumped to Pioneer Place. They include **FLOATING WORLD COMICS**, a **LEGO STORE**, a **MAGIC SHOP**, **KATHMANDU TO YOU**, and **AUNTIE ANNE'S PRETZELS**.

VERDUN FINE CHOCOLATES, the longtime Lebanese chocolate shop with beautiful foil wrapping for its chocolates, has closed its Pearl District shop in the Gregory, 421 NW 10th Ave., and headed for the suburbs.

ODE, a wellness café and apothecary operated by Gail Bolte and her daughter, Laine, has leased a space in the Raleigh Slabtown Building at 1585 NW 22nd Ave. They will serve organic coffee, smoothies, as well as gluten- and dairy-free food. They plan to open in early fall.

FELI, a Spanish restaurant, has leased the corner space at Slabtown Square, Northwest 21st and Raleigh streets. The menu will focus on the Andalusian region of Spain, including cured hams, seafood and gazpacho. The owners are husband-and-wife team Javier and Jael Canteras, who also own Urdaneta on Northeast Alberta Street.



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Three decades, three sisters at Ling Garden



By MICHAELA LOWTHIAN

“Table for three?” the woman running the front of the house at Ling Garden asked as we entered.

“Three generations, in fact,” I replied.

Over her shoulder, she cracked a smile that I took as “don’t be annoying” as she showed me, my mom and my daughter to a table.

Ling Garden remains on the same block where it started, although not in the same building. It launched in an old house but moved to the 21 Astor Building, which replaced it nearly 10 years ago. The old place had a huge fish tank just inside the door. The new place is simple and more spacious, with a few lanterns for decoration.

After a moment settling in, a second Ling sister asked if we were ready to order.

First we had some questions. “How long have you been open?”

“Thirty-one years,” she said with a smile.

“Did you celebrate the 30th anniversary?”

“No, we worked.”

Her own daughter, she added, helps sometimes, “but she doesn’t want to work this hard.”

That drew a wry laugh at the daughter’s expense.

A third Ling sister delivered another order and slipped back into the kitchen.

Then we ordered General Tso’s chicken, vegetable lo mein and potstickers.

While I worked up an appetite steering the conversation, my mom wanted to talk about world affairs (nope) or how the freight trains by Centennial Mill will create a barrier against its imminent collapse (also a bit intense for our companion) or tennis.

My daughter, who is studying pre-veterinary medicine, didn’t take the bait on any of these topics, but shared a work story about Bandit, a one-eyed dog who stays at Sniff Dog Hotel.

We opened our fortune cookies. Mine said, “Your willingness to take risks will soon be rewarded.” ■

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- ➔ Leading the council to ban surveillance/ AI pricing at grocery stores—everyone should pay the same price for the same product.
- ➔ Worked on making Portland more affordable by cutting taxes for small business and voting to hold the line on new taxes and spending, which will just get passed on to local residents.
- ➔ Championed the Sidewalk Improvement and Paving Program (SIPP) to invest in sidewalk improvements and pothole repairs throughout District 4.

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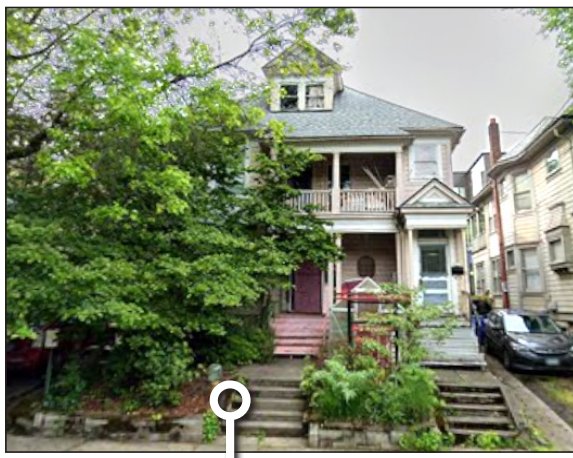
2857 NW SAVIER ST.

A demolition permit was granted last month to level a derelict 1908 house at 2857 NW Savier St. The 5,000-square-foot property was sold for \$540,000 last September to a developer who plans to build four three-story houses under the city's Cottage Clusters program.



2245 NW OVERTON ST.

The owner of a rental house has received permits to raise the building about 6 feet, create living space in the basement and attic and thoroughly remodel the 1900 structure. Two units and five bathrooms will be added. The owner, Raja Daggula, is a real estate agent and Intel engineering manager living in Gaston.



NAVIGATION CENTER

The River District Navigation Center, a 90-bed residential facility, closed last month, but the city may use it as a warming center during inclement weather. On Sept. 2, concerned neighbors scheduled a public meeting, at which Bybee Lakes Hope Center founder Alan Evans was to share his ideas for use of the temporary structure.



HOYT ARBORETUM

Portland Parks & Recreation has plans to replace the Hoyt Arboretum visitor center on Southwest Fairview Boulevard with two buildings, a single-story visitor hub with a nature store and a two-story "education and research" building containing administrative offices, classrooms and a herbarium.



115 NW 22ND PLACE

The Elephant's Deli property may be converted into a food cart pod and restaurant if preliminary plans shared with the city proceed. The 10,405 square-foot building, badly damaged in a fire in May, would be renovated and the parking lot reconfigured. The property is owned by a company managed by Dennis Sackhoff, president of Arbor Homes, a major builder of infill housing in Portland.



407 NW 17TH AVE.

A qualified affordable apartment building is contemplated on the half block between Northwest Flanders and Glisan streets on the west side of Northwest 17th Avenue. It would be four-to-six stories tall and have about 66-123 housing units. The owner is a property management company based in Everett, Wash. The site now has a one-story commercial building occupied by Icon Salon and Fish Sauce restaurant.



City-county merger campaign falls short

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

If Portland charter reform was a big idea, Northwest District resident Mattt Zmuda had a bigger one: Merge Portland and Multnomah County governments into a single entity.

A tech engineer, he read the 1971 state legislation allowing Portland and Multnomah County to merge. Though never attempted in 55 years, he figured it was doable. An initiative petition signed by 22,000 voters would have triggered a two-year process of official analysis and citizen engagement culminating in a referendum decided by a majority of affected voters.

“It would not be that difficult,” Zmuda initially surmised, unencumbered by professional political experience. “That was what I thought.”

That confidence led him to believe an all-volunteer effort might be sufficient, and he liked the purity of that path.

The easy way, he reasoned, would be to raise funds and hire an organization to collect the necessary signatures. The hard way proved harder than he anticipated. He never announced the number of signatures he collected.

“I wanted to do this the right way, which means not tapping into existing power structures and political organizations,” he said. “I could have approached business interests to solicit large donations and gotten a paid signature gathering firm. We probably could have reached that threshold pretty easily.

“But, I think that would have triggered a reaction. ... If business interests come out strongly on record for this, you would see the same negative reaction [as we’ve seen to] things like DSA.”

The division engendered by the Democratic Socialists of America bloc on the current City Council is not the kind of reform he had in mind.

“What I found is that this [merger proposal] doesn’t necessarily polarize around political ideology,” he said. “People who reached out were coming in equal parts from what’s called the moderate part of City Council—folks who supported Olivia Clark or Dan Ryan—but also, I have quite a few people from DSA.”

Zmuda made the effort, speaking to about 25

neighborhood groups after a kickoff event at the Lucky Labrador Pub in January.

“Overwhelmingly, people who understood it were supportive and enthusiastic,” he said.

“I showed up prepared to argue that two overlapping governments are one too many, and I almost never had to,” he wrote. “People are already there.

“Their questions start further down the road: How services would be organized, what would happen to tax rates, whether their dollars would finally buy better results. Portlanders want government that costs less and delivers more, and they’re ready for a serious, detailed conversation about the structure standing in the way.”

Turning that support into certified signatures, however, was a bigger task than he envisioned.

“A lot of the plans we had for yard signs, canvassing and organized drives didn’t materialize as hoped,” he wrote on MultNoMo.org.

“I work a full-time job and take my four young kids to school,” he told the NW Examiner. “I’m able to maybe work 10-20 hours per week. That’s not enough.”

The whole process was a learning experience, and he intends to continue that education.

“I’m going to be starting at PSU, doing their executive master’s in public administration program. Every other Saturday, a cohort of folks will get together and nerd out about administrative law,” he said with a smile. “So that should be a fun thing.”

Zmuda recalls another Portland political neophyte who wasn’t ashamed to admit he had things to learn.

“On the Johnny Carson show, [Portland mayor elect] Bud Clark told him he was enrolling at PSU. That was a big laugh line. It was unthinkable that people would have the humility to go to school and try to be the best person they could be.”

Zmuda won’t take this issue on alone again, but he remains optimistic that its time will come.

“I do see this reform as being inevitable,” he said.

A citizen initiative isn’t the only way a merger could be enacted. The City-County Act of 1971 (ORS 199.705-

199.795) can also be triggered by a majority vote of either the Portland City Council or the Multnomah County Board. As with an initiative, there would be a two-year period to draft referendum language that would be put to the voters.

Before any future merger campaign, Zmuda believes the enabling legislation needs to be tightened. For example, the complexities related to parts of the county not in any city are not spelled out, he said. He is in touch with state legislators who promise to refine the process.

“I’m in this for the long haul,” he wrote. “Portland is home for my family. My oldest is eight, and when she graduates high school in 2036, I want this to be a city worth coming back to — somewhere safe and energizing, with housing people can afford and opportunity worth staying for.”

Steve Kanter, a Northwest District resident and dean emeritus of the Lewis & Clark Law School, has followed Zmuda’s effort closely.

“I’m strongly in favor of looking at this again,” Kanter said. “People are hungry for a responsive government ... and there would be very strong support for it.”

Overlapping governments cloud authority and responsibility, he said, inviting buck-passing on tough issues or the opposite, unilateral action when cooperation is warranted.

Nothing exemplified the unwieldy divide between city and county more starkly than the matter of homeless shelter and services, issues designated for county control under a 1983 intergovernmental agreement. Mayor Keith Wilson’s central campaign pledge—to create 1,500 shelter beds—led the city to cover what should have been a county responsibility.



Mattt Zmuda

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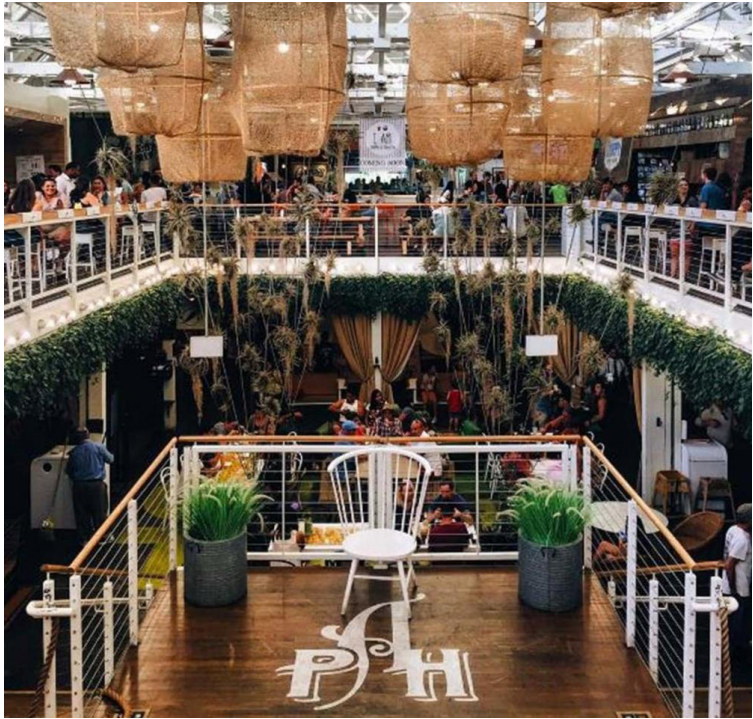
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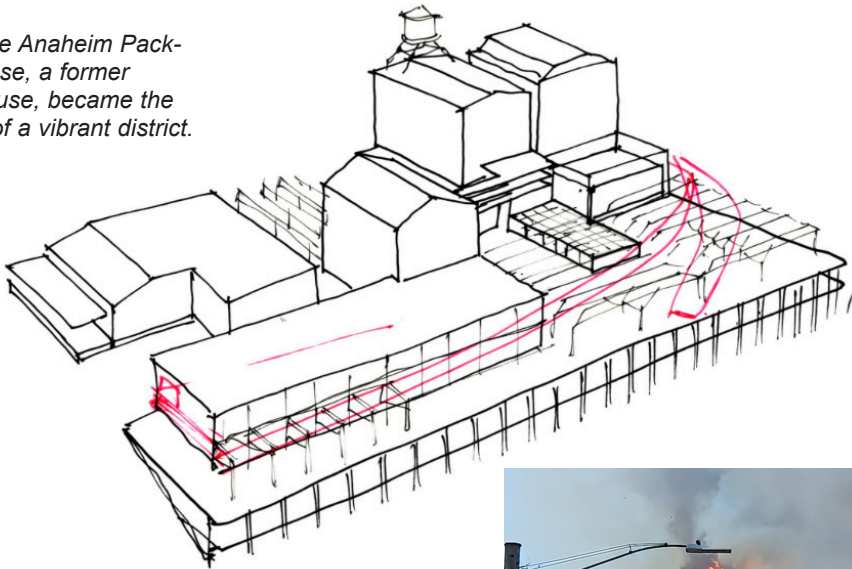
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Left: The Anaheim Packing House, a former warehouse, became the center of a vibrant district.



Above right: Shaheen Sadeghi's team planned to preserve the wharf, where a pedestrian bridge over North-west Naito Parkway could have landed.

Right: The Aug. 2 fire put a quick end to any possibility of preserving a Centennial Mills identity.



public spaces, the agency wanted office buildings and major companies.

Prosper Portland Executive Director Patrick Quinton said the proposal was too local, lacking in “regionally traded sector” industries.

“Why don’t you turn it into offices with a couple of food stalls at the bottom?” Sadeghi recalls Quinton suggesting.

Sadeghi was stunned. Four years devoted to a unique vision attuned to the time and place meant nothing. “I was so flabbergasted I walked out,” he said.

“The selection panel had chosen our concept, reflecting the progressive vision of the city leadership at that time, before the direction shifted.”

Sadeghi eventually extracted a settlement from Prosper Portland and took what he had learned to his home in Orange County, where they helped establish a city identity. His team created the Anaheim Packing District, anchored by the restored 1919 Sunkist Orange packing warehouse—which had sat vacant for three decades—and the adjacent 1920s Packard automotive showroom.

The parallels to Centennial Mills were inescapable. A private park was developed on a site formerly used to stable police horses, which also happens to be the last activity on the Portland site. Two high-end restaurants face the park. A historic 1917 MAKE building now houses local craft breweries, a distillery and artisan wineries.

The Packing House project received five prestigious Gold Nugget Awards (the leading residential design competition in the nation), earned Developer of the Year honors and was selected as the top preservation project in California. It is protected from demolition by listing on the National Register of Historic Places, which was Sadeghi’s intent for Centennial Mills.

LAB Holding LLC has developed about 50 projects throughout Orange County. Ten of them are in Anaheim. All are centered on local food artisans, makers, craft breweries, distilleries and wineries—the essence of its Centennial Mills vision. None of the approximately 50 restaurants are chains, the core philosophy behind the Portland project.

Portland shut out

What did Portland get? A series of demolitions of the 12-building mill complex, beginning in 2015 and estimated to have cost about \$19 million, not counting the elaborate takedown of the last Centennial Mills structure this month.

“The step-by-step destruction of the Centennial Mills complex is a tragic loss for preservation, riverfront open space and innovative commerce,” Thomas Meyer told the NW Examiner in the aftermath of the Aug. 2 fire. Now retired, Meyer was a principal founder of MS&R Architects of Minneapolis and part of Sadeghi’s Centennial Mills SEED project.

“The vision of the SEED project would have been a national landmark,” Meyer said.

National, perhaps, but in a very local way. LAB launched in the 1990s as a break from shopping mall conformity, built around independent shops drawing a younger crowd. LAB is an acronym for Little American Business.

A shadow of the SEED plan endures, on paper at least, in the James Beard Market, planned to begin reconstruction next year in the heart of downtown. The market was included in Sadeghi’s plan, but was then pulled into a proposed Morrison Bridgehead project that never came to be.

The market may have been a pawn of Melvin Park Companies, the developer of the bridgehead project and of Scott Andrews, who chaired Prosper Portland’s board at the time. Andrews was simultaneously president of Melvin Mark Properties, a division of MMC.

A 2012 NW Examiner story speculated that Andrews and his company did not want their venture to face competition from another major food-focused attraction less than a mile away. Andrews did not comment on that story.

Modest start

Prosper Portland bought the Centennial Mills property in 2000 with modest intentions to clear the land for a park. But Patty Gardner, a leader in the Pearl District Neighborhood Association

for more than a decade, advanced the idea of saving and restoring the Centennial Mills complex as a public attraction, an idea that gained steam at City Hall. The 2008 design competition involving three national developers and a comprehensive community engagement process was poised to make the dream tangible.

“The whole thing to me is completely tragic on many levels,” Gardner told the Examiner. “Tragic does not even begin to describe it. ... To say I’m bitter is fair.”

She blames leaders for pitting the SEED proposal against the James Beard Market and for lack of political vision.

“They decided you can only have one thing,” she said. “We could have had both.”

Portland also lost a visionary whose empire could just as well have been planted in the Rose City. Sadeghi had worked for Jantzen swimwear in its Northeast Sandy office for 10 years.

“There was a quiet revolution with talented younger people going on in America. It was about localization and personalization. I thought Portland was in the forefront of that movement,” he said.

Portland’s loss was Anaheim’s gain.

“Shaheen’s a great developer, and what he’s done [in California] is terrific,” Gardner said. “He had so much energy.”

Prosper Portland turned down interview requests to summarize its history with Centennial Mills. Instead, it issued this statement:

“Prosper Portland engaged in serious conversations to sell the property to private developers on at least six separate occasions. In each instance, a combination of the existing conditions including site contamination and physical limitations, shifting leadership priorities, federal/state/utility/local site obligations and requests for significant additional public investments led to the decision by the developer to not purchase the property or for the agency to decline to move forward with the proposal.” ■

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The Vista Bridge Centennial was celebrated Aug. 30 by closing the span to vehicles and letting neighbors, artists, vendors, elected officials and even geese enjoy a community gathering. Plein air painters from the Northwest Society of Artists showed their stuff, the MelloMacs choir was mellow, the dogs paraded without prompting and City Councilor Olivia Clark thanked Rachel Clark (no relation) for coordinating the whole event. It was called the Goose Hollow Foothills League's biggest street fair in nine years. "We're in the midst of a renaissance," Mayor Keith Wilson announced, "and I think everybody can see it ... in all four corners of the city."



The Pearl Culinary Farmers Market has been extended a month, through Oct. 26, due to its remarkable popularity.
Photo by datguy_eddy



Dolly Parton and Tim Curry were commemorated at the Low Brow Lounge.



The Mexico City soccer team held a rally at Couch Park in early August.



Mike Houck, executive director of the Urban Greenspaces Institute, will receive the National Olmsted Stewardship Award Sept. 25 at the Oregon Historical Society.

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