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Navigation Center funding may be cut

Neighbors say it brings more problems than solutions

ALLAN CLASSEN

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The River District Navigation Center on Northwest Naito Parkway may lose its Multnomah County funding by mid-year. Some neighbors suggest that could be a good thing.

The center has outworn community tolerance since the city and county took over operation of the 90-bed facility in 2023 and hired Transition Projects Inc. to manage it. A good neighborhood agreement with the Pearl District Neighborhood Association has frayed, and the association is reconsidering its support.

Glenn Traeger, a PDNA board member handling relations with the Navigation Center, said troubling incidents are mounting. He learned that a man expelled from the center remained in the notorious area at the base of a Broadway Bridge staircase by the center. There were reports of his threatening passersby and breaking car windows. Traeger said the center manager concluded that nothing could be done other than call the police, who likewise took no corrective action.

Traeger said that releasing this man into the neighborhood violated the good neighbor agreement.

Residents of The Yards, a public housing building adjacent to the Navigation Center, have complained. Michelle Ryding, who has lived at The Yards since soon after the center opened in 2019, said living next door to it has become

soon after the center opened in 2019, said living next door to it has become “horrific.”

Ryding said center staff do nothing to control behavior outside the facility or to clean trash, which is picked up every morning by her building’s maintenance staff.

“You never see the shelter staff ever,” she said.

Passing groups of people commanding the sidewalk and stairs is a gauntlet involving harassing comments, spitting on people and unleashed dogs, as well as illegal drug use and drinking. She said drug dealers park their cars along Naito Parkway to conduct their business.

Campers cluster by the Navigation Center, the green structure at right.

How would she feel about the possible closure of the Navigation Center?

“I don’t want to see anyone lose the roof over their heads,” she said, “but at the same time, there needs to be some accountability.”

Linda Witt, who chairs the PDNA Shelter Oversight Committee, said the consequences of four shelters in the district have become too great to bear.

“The River District Navigation Center is a low-barrier shelter in a high-density neighborhood, and none of the condo owners around there, none of the people at The Yards, want that center in their neighborhood,” she said. “TPI has done a terrible job of managing the impact of that shelter to the neighborhood. The city and county have argued and pointed fingers at each other.”

PDNA board member Judie Dunken advocated for years for cooperation with the center. No longer.

“The GNA does not work,” Dunken said. “I have to admit that I wanted it to go forward, but I think enough is enough.”

The Navigation Center is one of four shelters on Multnomah County’s tentative

The Navigation Center is one of four shelters on Multnomah County's tentative list for defunding after July 1. Final decisions on that list are expected this spring, and alternative funding sources may also be pursued.

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