

# Neighbors Take Opposition to Union Station Homeless Shelter to Court

**A new lawsuit accuses the city of breaking a series of promises in order to keep the 100-bed Northwest shelter open.**



By [Lucas Manfield](#)

January 27, 2024 at 11:42 am PST

The city of Portland and its economic development agency are being sued by three neighbors of a Northwest homeless shelter who say the city promised to tear it down.

The shelter, the River District Navigation Center, opened in 2019 after the city's economic development agency, Prosper Portland, leased property on the outskirts of Union Station to

Oregon Harbor of Hope. The nonprofit, with the help of a \$3 million donation from Columbia Sportswear's Tim Boyle, built a Quonset hutlike building on the property.

That lease was, by design, temporary. The structure was built on contaminated land, and the city ultimately planned to redevelop it. But when the lease ended last year, the city's need for shelters was greater than ever. The building currently houses around 100 people.

So, Mayor Ted Wheeler devised a workaround to keep the shelter open. Prosper Portland gave the city a permit to run it instead of the nonprofit.

Now, neighbors are crying foul. "Prosper Portland and the city of Portland, acting in concert with one another, have devised a scheme to operate a 'navigation center' on property where such a use is not allowed," say three members of Neighbors 4 Safe Smart Shelters, who filed suit on Friday asking the court to find the shelter in violation of the city's River District Urban Renewal Area Plan. The group has opposed city efforts to build shelters in neighborhoods across Portland.

They point to a series of promises over the years from the city that shelter would only be temporary, including wording in Harbor of Hope's original lease, which said "the temporary nature of the Leased Purpose is critical...a homeless shelter is not currently consistent with the Plan."

Furthermore, a city design review document stated "a condition of approval" was the "removal of the structures on the site after five years."

Michael Galizio, one of the neighbors bringing the lawsuit, says he and his co-plaintiffs are fed up with deteriorating conditions around the shelter and want it moved. "The city has backed us into a corner," he said. "We have no other choice but to seek action through the courts."

Neither the city nor Prosper Portland immediately responded to a request for comment.

In December, the city posted the following statement on its website: "We understand that many in the community expect the location to close based on agreements with Oregon Harbor of Hope, but we feel the continued crisis of homelessness in Portland requires us to continue services at this location. If we do not, the approximately 100 individuals at the location would need to find new living accommodations in short order or effectively revert back to a situation of living unsheltered on the street."