



OREGON LEGISLATURE

April 3, 2025

RE: St. Johns and Peninsula Park Community Center Closures

Dear Mayor Willson, Council President Pirtle-Guiney, Councilor Ryan, and Councilor Kanal,

We write to you today as legislators who have heard many concerns from constituents and as proud Portlanders who also share in their worries about the potential closure of several of our neighborhood community centers, specifically the two centers in our districts: **St. Johns and Peninsula Park Community Centers**. While we understand the difficult financial landscape facing the City and the challenging decisions ahead, we urge you to consider the long-term cost of divesting from these vital public spaces.

St. Johns Community Center is more than just a building but has become a cornerstone of community life in North Portland. This center was built in 1940 and is a staple of the neighborhood. Eliminating this community treasure would also impact all the programs and services currently provided to the community through this facility. Staff reductions, recreation programs, educational and afterschool programs, event spaces and rentals will all be slashed. Just as importantly, families have come to rely on the St. Johns Community Center for use of aftercare. This would be a detrimental loss for our communities in a time when childcare is rising and hard to come by.

As you know, North Portland is one of the most ethnically and socioeconomically diverse areas in the city. These centers promote equity, connection, and public health in ways that are difficult to quantify but deeply felt. Eliminating them, even in part, risks deepening the very disparities we have worked so hard to address. We recognize the immense pressure and hard budget cut decisions that lay before you. But in the process of these necessary deliberations, we ask that you not lose sight of what makes Portland whole. Community centers may not bring in the most revenue, but their return on investment is immeasurable when we consider the human impact.

Closing any of these centers, even one, would leave a lasting void. We respectfully urge the city to seek creative alternatives and exhaust all other means first. The early stages of this budget process present an opportunity for deeper collaboration and bold thinking. Otherwise, we also risk driving away the very people we are trying to protect.

We stand ready to work with you to explore viable solutions and to elevate the voices of our constituents who rely on these essential services. Portlanders deserve a city that not only listens but also protects and uplifts its communities, especially those that have historically been underserved. Together, we can fight for them. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to serving all Portlanders.

Warm regards,

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland

State Senator Lew Frederick
Senate District 22, North/NE Portland