
Multnomah County District 3

February 21, 2025

Dear Chair Vega Pederson,

I appreciate the opportunity we had in January to convene in a Work Session as the new Multnomah County Commission to discuss our priorities for the year and align around shared values and goals. Homelessness and housing remain top concerns for our community, as well as for me.

At that work session, I shared additional needs in our community that are my central focus for the FY 2026 budget process that I would like to elevate as you draft your proposed budget. In addition to taking bold action to make measurable progress on reducing homelessness, my budget priorities include expanding access to addiction treatment and recovery services; improving community safety and reducing gun violence; accelerating economic development and empowerment countywide; and making the County more transparent, accessible and aligned with more democratic practices.

Taking Bold Action to End Homeless and Expand Pathways to Housing

Given the Commission's shared commitment to addressing homelessness, it is essential that we establish clear goals to ensure our strategies effectively make significant net reductions in homelessness and increase long-term housing placements. Expanding sheltering capacity must remain a central component of our strategies, and it is critical that we fulfill our commitment to deliver on the Community Sheltering Strategy outlined in the Homelessness Response Action Plan (HRAP) to substantially increase shelter beds by year-end as a path to basic services, safety and stable housing.

Ultimately, the County should be driving to a goal of ending street camping, which is unsafe and inhumane for those who cannot access shelter or housing and has a detrimental impact on neighborhoods and local businesses. It is imperative to the health and safety of individuals on the street that the County – in partnership with the City of Portland – delivers the following:

- Support funding Portland's planned increase of 1,500 shelter beds
- Extend funding for the 200 recently added winter shelter beds beyond the initial 90-day period
- Preserving existing alternative shelters, such as the Sunderland Safe Rest Village
- Replacing the 100+ Do Good Multnomah shelter beds that are closing this spring with other central city shelter beds that serve a similar population
- Continue to support daytime service to those unsheltered or who only have access to nighttime shelter.

The County must also enhance the impact of Supportive Housing Services funding by improving homelessness outreach and services, while establishing an improved Intergovernmental Agreement to increase transparency and accountability. Furthermore, strengthening partnerships with community

Multnomah County District 3

members and businesses by requiring Good Neighbor Agreements be crafted before opening new shelter sites will foster more sustainable relationships and stronger support systems.

Reducing Gun Violence and Investing in Community Safety

East Portland and neighborhoods in District 3 continue to experience disproportionate rates of gun violence and crime. It is imperative we invest in and expand gun safety strategies and initiatives with a proven record of successfully connecting people to services, lowering crime rates and reducing recidivism. We must also find opportunities to expand capacity to investigate homicides and gun dispositions when protective orders are in place, as well as ensure the continuation of support services and staff resources for survivors of domestic violence.

Multnomah County is responsible for many elements of the local public safety and criminal justice system, and it is important that we prioritize and improve its overall capacity to meet the needs of our community. With this in mind, I will be advocating during the Legislative Session for full funding for Community Corrections from the State. Additionally, as we consider budget priorities and strategies to improve local community safety, my focus will be on the following:

- Converting chronic one-time funding to ongoing funding for neighborhood programs that support public safety efforts, including neighborhood district attorneys through the Multnomah County Access Attorney Program (MAAP)
- Improving the safety of County correctional facilities for staff and Adults in Custody by funding staffing for additional jail beds and converting one-time investments into sustained Sheriff's Office funding that ensures adequate staffing in accordance with national best practices
- Begin planning with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office for the replacement of the Multnomah County Detention Center
- Providing adequate funding for the District Attorney's office so that staffing aligns with national standards and supporting statewide efforts that address the shortage of public defenders to ensure justice is equitable, effective and efficient
- Adding a .5 FTE to the Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) for a Data Analyst – or reassigning existing FTE duties – for ongoing development of public safety trends to more effectively curate and disseminate data to local decision makers to improve coordination and effective action
- Support and expand proven crime reduction programs into East Portland, such as the East Multnomah Outreach Prevention Intervention (EMOPI) initiative, which is successfully reducing gun violence through a coordinated, collaborative approach in Gresham and East Multnomah County

Opening the Doors to 24/7 Drop-Off Sobering Services

First responders, public safety experts and health professionals have been clear about the urgent need for a sobering center since the 2019 closure of the sobering center in Portland to serve as a community

Multnomah County District 3

resource and alternative to jail, emergency departments or leaving individuals on the streets. I am encouraged by the expected addition of the 13 temporary sobering beds at the Coordinated Care Pathway Center and appreciate the commitment to move forward with urgency the opening of a permanent 24/7 Sobering and Crisis Stabilization Center in 2026.

Ensuring sobering services come online as quickly and safely as possible is a top priority, and providing a connection to recovery services is a critical part of the behavioral health continuum of care. These urgently needed services are at the intersection of public safety and health and will require funding for the following:

- Operating the 13 sobering beds at the Pathway Center, gathering learnings and preparing to shift services to the permanent location
- Continuing project implementation for the 24/7 Sobering and Crisis Stabilization Center and laying the groundwork for short and long-term funding models
- Expanding mobile crisis services or partnering with Portland Street response that can shuttle individuals to services

Increasing Recovery Services and Expanding Access to Behavioral Health

Addressing behavioral health remains a key priority for our community. The County must create more pathways for individuals to connect with short and long-term treatment and recovery services by setting measurable goals, identifying gaps and reporting on the progress we are making. The County should build on the Comprehensive Local Plan+ by prioritizing the following strategic investments:

- Funding sobering and mobile crisis services and pursuing Medicaid reimbursements and state dollars. Sobering and mobile crisis are two essential services at the front-end of the behavioral health continuum of care that offer a desperately needed entry point and opportunity for more services and housing.
- Investing in and increasing access to community-based structured housing, including transitional, recovery-oriented housing units and pathways to affordable, permanent housing. Doing this will help alleviate bottlenecks, reduce barriers to recovery and improve the throughput and outcomes of individuals from withdrawal management and stabilization in the behavioral health continuum into housing.
- Effectively coordinating services within the behavioral health continuum and notably, supporting efforts to effectively coordinate between acute inpatient behavioral health services front doors such as those at Unity and Providence with the sobering beds coming online this spring at the Pathway Center.
- Sustainably funding culturally-specific behavioral health services. Culturally-specific providers have the knowledge and trust of their communities to provide trauma-informed care and behavioral health services that centers lived experiences to best ensure success.

Multnomah County District 3

Accelerating Economic Growth and Countywide Empowerment

The County has a unique responsibility and plays a vital role as the provider of social services, health services and supportive safety net services. However, our ability to fund and provide these critical services is inextricably linked to the vitality of the local economy and wellbeing of our workforce. It is then imperative that the County play an active role in improving economic conditions for Multnomah County residents by accelerating economic development and creating more opportunities for working families

As a budgeting principle, the County should dedicate all County Video Lottery revenue toward a countywide economic empowerment strategy that includes measurable targets, in alignment with Oregon Revised Statutes 461.547 and 461.512. Additional economic empowerment priorities include:

- Creating and implementing an economic empowerment and equitable recovery strategy that lifts all those living, raising families, working and doing business in Multnomah County
- Establishing an equitable tax structure by indexing Preschool for All income tax to keep pace with inflation and protect the buying power of County residents
- Establishing a level playing field and addressing living-wage issues for the County's contracted workforce by ensuring fairness and equity, especially regarding vulnerable populations

A Safe and Healthy Facility for Animals in Multnomah County's Care

For more than eight years, Multnomah County Animal Services has struggled with an outdated facility that has been overcrowded and does not adequately provide for the needs of animals in County care.

It is imperative that the project move forward. The \$3.5M capital fund for the Animal Services Building Replacement Project established in 2016 with the sale of the "pig farm" remains largely untouched. So building on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget note, the planning effort to reimagine Multnomah County Animal Service should come from the capital fund for the replacement project. Any potential costs associated with site preparation and/or acquisition should also be prioritized and considered in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

Advancing District 3 Priorities and Community Initiatives

In addition to these countywide budget priorities, I am committed to working in District 3 with East Portland residents on projects that promote economic empowerment, community, safety and neighborhood livability. This includes supporting projects, community initiatives and organizations that provide community services in District 3, such as the following:

- Unite Oregon that includes services for culturally specific small business development
- Advancing the creation of an 82nd Avenue Management District to remediate and abate trash, biohazards and graffiti. The County operates numerous services in the area that affect the livability of the neighborhood and should partner with agencies in a model similar to the successful model provided by the Gateway Management District

Multnomah County District 3

- Supporting library modernizations and improvements, including completion of the modernization of the Belmont Library
- Supporting County programming that supports the Asian Health and Service Center, which uniquely provides culturally-specific behavioral health resources and services, nutritional meals and case management, and counseling services for older adults in East Portland among its core services.
- Activating the site of the former Hansen building, located at 12240 Northeast Glisan Street, by allocating \$6M in one-time funds to demolish the building and support community planning and engagement on future site development.

I am looking forward to the FY 2026 budget process and our discussions around priorities in the year ahead, which for me include preserving County staff positions and services which directly benefit the essential services to our community.

Regards,



Julia Brim-Edwards