



## One Year In; Moving From The North Side Of Chicago To West Gresham

It's great to live in an area with families that truly look out for one another.

By: Eric El Kay  
Wilkes East neighbor

This past month marked my family's first year in the neighborhood. Last May my wife and I (along with our cat Mia and dog Lupita) set out on a 3-day journey from the North side of Chicago to our new home in the Wilkes East neighborhood of Gresham. Over the past year, we set out to explore what the neighborhood has to offer. We've also taken on quite a lot of projects around the house. These activities along with starting new jobs and making new friends have kept us pretty busy over the last year. They have also led to quite an eventful first year in the Pacific Northwest. Here's a peek at what the El Kay's have been up to during Year 1.

I never saw myself being responsible for 50 full-grown goldfish but after a year of caretaking, I can honestly say I wouldn't have it any other way. When my wife and I moved in we inherited a 2000-gallon fresh water pond in the backyard. This led to many hours of fresh pond research along with several "How to not let your fish die" books purchased. After a crash course in pond vacuum techniques, pond filter light bulb installation, and a constant battle with a certain neighborhood heron, I can honestly say that our newly expanded backyard family is thriving. This wasn't always the case. Last year's heat wave took a toll on our community's population but we have bounced back stronger than ever. We've also been able to give names to every single fish. Names include Walter Payton, Dick Butkus, Mike Ditka, and many other childhood legends that remind me of home.



My wife and I were fortunate enough to inherit a great garden setup. The owners before definitely had a green thumb. After trying our hands at gardening last summer we went into this year with a gameplan. Things grow so much faster compared to what we're used to in the Midwest. The soil is truly magnificent here - we can grow things without much effort at all. This year we started with re-building 3 raised garden beds in the front yard along with upgrading the sprinkler system. With the amount of gardening on our property, a timer system is a must. Robyn has started the season with kale, chard, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers (hot and sweet), peas, beets, raspberries, blueberries, and a plethora of herbs. Although there is more work to be done in the future, it seems that we have settled into our harvest and watering routines early. Now we begin the endless learning of preservation, and whatever version of "living off the land" we can muster.

In between spending time out back with our Hall of Fame goldfish and greenery, we have done a fair job of exploring what the neighborhood has to offer.

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### Wilkes East Land-Use Update

By Greg Hartung,  
Board Member, Land-use Co-Chair

Hello members of our Wilkes East Neighborhood Association.

The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association board regularly receives land use plans from the City of Gresham to notify us of land use projects within or proximity to the Wilkes East neighborhood boundaries.

**Pre-Application PRE-23-00498:** Early Neighborhood Notification of [2751 NE 181st Avenue](#) & 2777-2789 NE 181st Avenue, Gresham, Oregon 97230. The owner is proposing to develop two (2) parcels with a new 7-Eleven 4-pump commercial truck commercial fueling station with a 30-foot by 68-foot canopy (approximately 18 feet tall). Also included is a small, 13'x11'/135 square foot compressor shed. A pedestrian pathway is proposed from the new fueling island to the existing 7-Eleven store. Access to the site will be via the existing driveway off NE 181st Avenue which will be widened to the south to accommodate larger trucks. The northern approach will also be widened to allow for larger turning movements.

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### 2024-2025 School Start and End Times



	START TIME	END TIME	LATE START
WILKES	8:50 am	3:20 pm	10:00 am
HB LEE	7:30 am	2:15 pm	8:40 am
REYNOLDS MIDDLE	7:30 am	2:15 pm	8:40 am
REYNOLDS HIGH	8:00 am	3:00 pm	9:10 am
REYNOLDS LEARNING	9:05 am	3:45 pm	10:15 am

*Did you know?* The area now known as Gresham was first settled in 1851 by the brothers Jackson and James Powell, who claimed land under the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. They were soon joined by other pioneer families, and the area came to be known as Powell's Valley.

Se Habla Español



## Mark Your Calendar!

Wilkes East Neighborhood

### Summer 2024 Meeting

August 12th • 7PM

Moose Lodge • 16411 NE Halsey

Wilkes East Neighborhood Association Newsletter

Published three times a year. Over 1500 copies distributed throughout Wilkes East.

The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association (WENA) is a non-profit organization in Gresham, Oregon. Deadline for submission is the 10th of the month prior to publication. WENA reserves all rights, and all copy may be edited for clarity and length. Download a PDF of this newsletter online at: wilkeseastna.org/newsletter.htm.

BOARD MEMBERS

- Chair ..... Kris Freiermuth chair@wilkeseastna.org
Vice Chair ..... (Vacant) vicechair@wilkeseastna.org
Secretary.....Gail Voge secretary@wilkeseastna.org
Treasurer ..... Billy Simmons treasurer@wilkeseastna.org
Land Use ..... Greg Hartung Kris Freiermuth landuse@wilkeseastna.org
At-Large..... Robyn El Kay Eric El Kay Bob Lundbom member2@wilkeseastna.org webmaster@wilkeseastna.org

BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 6:30PM. See wilkeseastna.org for details.

CONTACT US

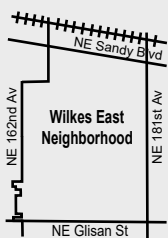
Email: info@wilkeseastna.org
Postal Mail: 17104 NE Oregon, Portland OR 97230

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Get involved. Let us know how you'd like to help. Email info@wilkeseastna.org for details.

SPECIAL THANKS

- The newsletter is funded in part through a generous grant from the City of Gresham.
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Dear Neighbors • a message from your WENA President

We are at the halfway mark of our 2024 calendar. Between winter cold and summer hot the calendar pages came flying off. We have survived it all thank goodness! Our little corner of the world is a wonderful place to be! We hope all is well with your families, which is more important than anything!

We recently received wonderful news from the City of Gresham Neighborhood Groups Committee. Our matching grant request of \$1,370.81 was selected fully for the 2024–2025 calendar period. You played a large part in our ability to receive these monies to get us through the year. Our total volunteer hours came to 474.25. This was 75 hours more than our prior year. We had added neighbors come forward to donate time. We are truly fortunate to have more than a dozen members who have been active since the very beginning of our first issue of the newsletter in 2009. YOU ARE GREAT! The City allows \$50.00 per hour (this is not cash, but the amount for your time, whether it's delivering newsletters or time spent keeping our community engaged by attending meetings and/or time spent working for the continued improvement of our area.

There are many opportunities to be effective in our community. You can contact any board member or neighbor. You might also attend our monthly board meetings by contacting Greg

Hartung (landuse@wilkeseastna.org) or Robyn Elkay (member2@wilkeseastna.org) for the ZOOM meeting link the week prior to our meeting, or visit https://www.wilkeseastna.org. Our Board Meetings are from January through November via ZOOM.

Ed Spradlen, recipient of the Dental Foundation of Oregon Dental Volunteer of 2023, will be speaking at our August 12th public meeting. He collects beer pop and juice bottles and cans that have a deposit. This money is financial assistance for dental patients. Please bring any of these items to our August 12th meeting to help him fulfill his goal for 2024. (Please rinse your cans and bottles before donating).

The leaders of the kids day camp "Play Grow Learn" are on our agenda to tell us about their program. The day camp is held at Nadaka Park from June 24, 2024 to Aug 24, 2024.

We are always looking for newsletter stories involving neighbors, family, anything of interest or entertaining. Let's get to know one another better. SHARE with us!

We hope you will join us at the Moose Lodge, 16411 NE Halsey Street, Monday August 12, 2024 at 7PM.

Your Neighbor & Friend, Kristen Freiermuth

MOVING (Page 1)

Outside of daily check-ins with our neighbors (which is not something you normally get in a Chicago townhouse), we've made it a point to find every hidden gem. I've made a habit out of running at the H.B. Lee track and (when I'm feeling adventurous) the Glendoveer Golf Course, which from our house to around the course and back typically results in about a 4.5 mile run. While exploring the local culture and community we've become very familiar with food trucks, especially our favorite, the Fairview Food Plaza and Food Cart Heaven on Glisan. I'll also admit, as someone who grew up hiding from weather half the year, easy access to Powell Butte has turned me into an outdoorsman.

This year has brought a lot of change for the El Kay's. The community has made this transition period a positive experience. I really can't express how great it is to live in an area with families that stop each other on the street to chat and truly look out for one another. While change can be scary, you have all made this a positive experience with your community and sense of belonging. We know 2025 will bring more home improvement projects, goldfish babies, and many many more trips to La Isla Bonita and Migration Brewing. It'll also bring more changes. I for one can't wait to see what else it brings. ■

WeShine Village Update



By Lucile Harden
Wilkes East neighbor

WeShine's micro village at Parkrose Community United Church of Christ continues to thrive and continues to offer transitional shelter to vulnerable adults with hygiene, sanitation, service connections and support while guests await access to permanent affordable housing. Several have been able to get into permanent housing in the last couple of years.

WeShine recently had an open house of a second location in southeast Portland. It's called Avalon micro village and houses 10 pods. This location was possible with contributions from Portland Integrus Architecture, Gather Make Shelter, Constructing Hope, Portland Bureau of Transportation, the Home Builders Foundation, and the Joint Office of Homeless Services. Another micro village location is planned in the near future in North Portland. ■

Did you know? Ninety percent of the world's population lives above the equator.

Advertisement for Ride Connection with logo, phone number 503.226.0700, and website www.rideconnection.org. Text: Providing responsive, accessible transportation at no cost for seniors and people with disabilities.

**HOUSING VERSUS TREES IN GRESHAM:** The trees are losing, but housing developments may eventually stop

By Janet Unruh, Wilkes East neighbor

For nature lovers who hate to see the land scraped bare for housing developments, our best hope is that soon, it will no longer be profitable for developers to build new housing. This is our best hope because the city turns a deaf ear to the pleas of residents to stop, or at least reduce the size of new developments.

I recently attended an Early Neighborhood Notification (ENN) meeting for Kelly Creek, where a 149-lot housing development is planned. The city requires developers to have ENN meetings with the neighbors to show them the site plans and answer questions. However, as is generally the case, most of the residents' questions can't be answered because ENN meetings are held too early in the development process. Residents have virtually no influence over housing developments and no one from the city attends ENN meetings. Developers only want to know about things that could materially affect construction, like a nearby sinkhole. Like all the ENN meetings I've attended, residents expressed anger and frustration. They mentioned their love of trees and birds, their ire for traffic and parking problems, and concerns for kids' safety. One resident said the plan showed five narrow lots abutting the back of his property. The unresolved conflict between the neighbors and the developer reminded me of the "Rockwood Greenspace" at 270 NE 188th. In that case, neighbors campaigned to save 1.22 acres and 50 Douglas Firs, but the city thwarted their efforts[1].

Oregon law requires Portland Metro to forecast its population and employment growth every six years for the following 20 years. Metro must then distribute the projected need for housing among cities within the urban growth boundary[2]. For Gresham, the estimate in 2021 was 6,229 new housing units by 2040. 1,993 (32%) of these were expected to be townhouses. The state of Oregon has since updated the new total of units needed in Gresham by the year 2045 to 7,872[3].

According to city data, 1,641 acres of "vacant" land are available for development in Gresham. This includes not only greenfield lots but other scraps of open space, specifically large lots with houses or buildings that also have a half-acre or more of vacant land[4]. Based on these assumptions, the city says it has sufficient land to accommodate growth. Currently, there are 33 subdivisions under construction or in planning. This includes 2,141 total lots of which 1,138 (and potentially more) will be divided up for middle housing[5].

Middle housing includes duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, and cottage clusters[6]. House Bill 2001 (2019) and Senate Bill 458 (2021) required changes to the development code to allow middle housing to be built in areas formerly zoned for single-family homes with yard space. Because of this, townhouses are being built in those areas instead. Townhouses are favored by developers because the lot size minimum for townhouses is 16' by 70' or 1,120 square feet[7]. This results in tall, narrow housing units with shared side walls. The city manager has the power to approve these developments with minimal constraints[8]. Plans for street trees compete with utilities and little-to-no setbacks. Instead of planting trees, developers are allowed to pay into the tree fund.

Is Gresham going to need so much new housing? Most of Gresham's in-migration occurred between 2010 and 2020[9], and currently, Gresham's population is shrinking[10][11]. The outer areas of Gresham, such as Kelly Creek and Pleasant Valley, which are mainly rural, are fated to have more densification due in part to the intended effect of the metro boundary—to contain growth.

However, with so many units being built, and the population decreasing, the "inventory," as it is called in real estate jargon, will increase. In other words, there will be too many units available for sale to support a sale price that would ensure profitability. At some point, a threshold will probably be crossed when it's no longer profitable to build. A possible exception to this would be government subsidies that cover more of the costs of building. A slowdown in building developments will be marked by an increase in inventory (above 10%), price reductions, and the number of days on the market (over 15 is considered a lot).

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And then, there's the matter of affordability. Government agencies use median family income (MFI), which is the halfway point between the highest income earner in the area to the lowest. As such, it is higher than the average income for a given area. However, it's what we have to work with. The data below are from the Gresham Community Development Plan, Volume 1[12].

If your household of two earns...	\$27,600 /year	\$46,100 /year	\$73,700 /year	\$92,100 /year	\$110,500 /year
Which is...	30% of MFI	50% of MFI	80% of MFI	100% of MFI	120% of MFI
Then you can afford...	\$690/month rent (!)	\$1,150/month or 138K to 161K home sale price	\$1,840/month or 258K to 295K home sale price	\$2,300/month or 322K to 368K home sale price	\$2,760/month or \$387K to \$442K home sale price[13]

MFI...	Extremely low income (<30% of MFI)	Very low income (30-50% of MFI)	Low income (50-80% of MFI)	Middle income (80-120% of MFI)	High income (>120% of MFI)
Percent of households in Gresham	26%	17%	22%	18%	16%

This means that 83% of our current residents can't afford to buy a (town-) house. The cost of most (town-) houses in Gresham is over \$400,000. Only high-income households, earning 120% or more of MFI can afford to buy them. Will Gresham attract enough high-income earners to absorb thousands of new \$400,000-plus (town-) houses?

Essentially, the need for massive new housing developments is contraindicated by declining population and house prices that are out of reach for most people. Developers can't wait forever to gain the profit they expect, and when losses accumulate, the building projects will stop.

I recently drove to Pleasant Valley, to [SE Giese and SE 190th](#), to see the developments. I took a few pictures, like the one below.



Here's an example of acres that have been cleared and flattened by excavators. In the distance, new houses are packed close together. Trees and nature have been wiped out. In their place, construction materials are assembled—materials such as acrylic, vinyl, particle board, and god-knows-what. In 100 years, the materials containing these unnatural chemicals will be hauled to landfills, where they will be rained on; the runoff will then find its way to creeks and rivers, and to living organisms. I hope that one day we will have ways to break down massive amounts of garbage into their molecular components and recycle them. I've done some research in this area and found that the work has started, but it is not yet a priority in our for-profit economy.

As I came home to Wilkes East, I saw all the trees we have, and my weary mind was restored to a sense of appreciation and joy.

Visit <https://wilkeseastna.org/node/3713> for endnotes and photos. ■

July Heat and Wildfires

By Wilkes East Meteorologist Garret Hartung



The Pacific Northwest had a rather mild start to the summer of 2024. The month of June ended up a whopping 2.7°F below average with precipitation also coming in slightly below average. This is a stark contrast from the last three June's which all featured above average temperatures. The slightly cooler temperatures we saw in June were in part due to persistent upper level troughing in the Gulf of Alaska, an area of cooler air aloft that maintains onshore flow and often steers frontal systems through the Pacific Northwest. This is a pattern we often see in the wintertime, hence why this June was dubbed "January" by many local meteorologists.

A common adage around the Pacific Northwest is that summer does not start until July 5th. According to that, summer was right on time this year as a potent upper-level ridge developed across the Western US around July 4th, allowing for many locations to see their first 100°F readings of the year. This early July heat wave did not match the magnitude of the great June heat dome of 2021 as temperatures peaked at only 104°F at PDX. However, this heat wave was historic in terms of duration with five consecutive days of temperatures reaching or exceeding 99°F, which ties the record set back in August of 1981 and July of 1941.

Warm and dry conditions have continued through the first half of July with high temperatures so far averaging 11°F above the average of 80°F for the month of July. The persistent hot and dry conditions have quickly dried out the vegetation across the state, allowing for wildfire season to come roaring back to life, especially east of the Cascades. So far this year over 300,000 acres have burned in Oregon, already surpassing the roughly 260,000 acres that burned in all of 2023. Most of the fires so far have been human caused. On July 16th/17th, a system moving up the Oregon coast triggered many thunderstorms across the central portions of the state, likely starting dozens of new fires. So unfortunately, the acreage burned will continue to increase as we head deeper into the driest period of the year.

There will likely be a period or two where smoke makes its way west of the Cascades during the later part of the summer, especially if we get an offshore/easterly flow event. Smoke is a regular and natural occurrence for the Pacific Northwest, but it can be hazardous at times, especially for more vulnerable population groups. Having new filters in HVAC systems and running air purifiers can help to limit smoke particles inside of the home. N-95 mask can also be helpful when venturing outside should air quality becomes hazardous from smoke. It is also important to be extremely careful in our wildland areas for the rest of the summer as even the smallest spark can start large and dangerous fires. ■

LAND USE (Page 1)

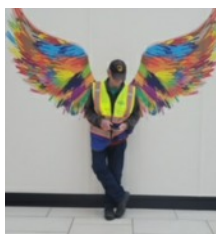
An exit-only will be constructed providing access for fueled trucks onto NE 181st Avenue southbound (which has already been discussed and approved by City of Gresham transportation staff). The two existing lots may also be combined. An Early Neighborhood Notification meeting will be tentatively scheduled for the week of July 29, 2024.

Design review DR-23-00600, Location 17311 NE Halsey St, Portland Or 97230, proposal: Retroactive review of previous tree removal and approximately 25,000 square feet of outdoor storage area and conversion of parking to outdoor storage, plus new outdoor storage of approximately 38,000 square feet. Applicant proposed a minor variance to exceed the maximum standard for outdoor storage by 20%. The proposed includes past and future removal of 111 regulated trees.

Wilkes East Neighborhood Association submitted public comments regarding the tree removal. They acknowledged the

need for some tree removal to allow for business expansion but described the requested amount of tree removal as "excessive." They described several benefits which mature trees provide to the urban landscape and noted their importance as a fixture of the Wilkes East Neighborhood.

Staff agree with the many benefits provided by mature trees as described by the Neighborhood Association. Preservation of mature trees is a goal of the City of Gresham. The City is presently revising the Tree Regulations in the Community Development Code to better reflect community values. While the tree removal associated with this application is significant, the applicant proposes to retain and protect 142 mature trees on site. The applicant does not propose removing more than the necessary number of trees to accommodate the proposed expansion. Staff find that reasonable efforts have been made to retain mature trees where possible and that the applicant's proposal meets the standards for Type II Tree Removal in Section 9.1000. Questions about the decision? Please contact Emily Langston at [Emily.Langston@GreshamOregon.gov](mailto:Emily.Langston@GreshamOregon.gov). ■



Meet the Tooth Taxi Volunteer

My name is Ed Spradlin, I am 77yrs young, and I have lived in Portland/Gresham all my life. I grew up in North Portland across from Columbia Park. I attended grade school in Portsmouth and Highland. I then attended Jefferson High School, followed by Oregon State University. I was drafted to Vietnam, and after my return continued my education to graduate from Portland State University. My family ultimately moved out to Gresham 45 years ago, and I have lived there ever since. I am now involved in volunteering for a non-profit that helps under privileged children get access to dental care. [The Dental Foundation of Oregon](#) is a non-profit organization that supports and funds the "Tooth Taxi". This is basically a large rolling dental clinic on wheels that travels across Oregon to schools and communities, not only educating families, but giving actual dental care to children in need. My family and friends have also joined me in my efforts to help raise money for this cause. What started as me walking the streets in search of cans and bottles to raise money, has now blossomed into an ever growing team of individuals sharing in this effort - team "Can Do". Every day I am overwhelmed by the beauty of all these individuals who have eagerly stepped up to be a part of something that is growing in support. People want to help. They just, often, don't know how. I have realized something in this process, and it is validated everyday by all the people who have joined this cause. We can do amazing things alone, but we can do even more amazing things together. Together we are team "Can Do". ■

Save the Date!
Wilkes East Neighborhood Summer 2024 Meeting
Monday, August 12th, 7PM
Moose Lodge • 16411 NE Halsey
• Ed Spradlin - Tooth Taxi Volunteer
• Janet Unruh - Housing vs Trees
• Play Grow Learn - Kids Day Camp
• Neighborhood news and more
See you there!

Are you signed up?
Nextdoor.com is the social networking service for neighbors to connect with each other. Sign-up today!