

SUNNYSIDE

Neighborhood News

February 2024

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org

board@sunnysideportland.org

News from the President

By Chris Waldmann, SNA President

Hi Sunnysiders! Let's hope that as the dark days of winter roll on, you are finding warmth, joy and lots of fun things to do around town and in the neighborhood as we wait for sunnier days! Sorry for the winter-blues, but I'm writing this towards the end of our MLK-week storm. Ice, go away! On to the wrap up...

In January, we welcomed back the folks from the Multnomah County Library and their architecture partner, Bora. The presentation was great and I'm super excited to see this expansion happen. The renovation will more than double the available space and allow for much broader community uses, including spaces for teens, meeting rooms, larger story-times for children, and of course plenty of room for books and periodicals. There were lots of wonderful questions and comments from attendees. Here's a summary:

- Several people asked about reduced on-site parking. Much of the existing lot will be given over to constructing the new addition. People wondered if a deal could be struck with Walgreens to allow parking, including short-term spots when you just need to run in to pick up a book you have on hold.
- Attendees were concerned that the bike parking was insufficient and that the existing bike parking area, on Taylor, would make a better place for bikes than the planned space flush with the front of the building (facing Cesar Chavez).
- There were questions about accessibility for those with disabilities, with people noting that there is only one dedicated handicapped parking space and that the ramp to enter the building will be further

away from both the bus stop and crosswalk on Taylor than the current one.

People were hoping for a bigger space and suggested that there should be a 3rd floor and that the 2nd place option that was presented to the public during initial design provided for 3,000 additional square feet of space and only lost by 23 votes.

The design is not completely finalized, but the team is quickly moving forward to complete this phase. The current plan is to break ground in late 2024 and have the library reopen in late 2025. You can see the Powerpoint slides at sunnysideportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/BelmontLibraryPresentation.pdf. Stay tuned for more updates!

Second, we have a **SPECIAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT!** Typically, the SNA has held General Meetings every other month, so our next one would be in March. But, Representative Rob Nosse reached out and would like to come talk to us sooner so we have tentatively scheduled a special General Meeting on Thursday, February 8th at 7 p.m. Please note that this is right in the middle of the Oregon Legislature's short session, so this meeting is subject to change based on Rep. Nosse's schedule so keep an eye on our website (sunnysideportland.org) for any changes.

Finally, I wanted to issue an apology arising from the January meeting. I violated our Community Agreements when I interrupted a member who was asking the library and design team to look (with Trimet) at removing the bus stop in front of the library following the death this past summer of librarian Jeanie Diaz, who was killed by a drunk driver while she waited for the bus to go home. I should not have stepped on his comments and I truly apologize. I will try to do better in the future.

Upcoming Meetings

Check sunnysideportland.org for location details and agenda.

February

Feb. 1st: 6:30pm SNACC Meeting
Feb. 8th: 7:00pm General (tentative) & Board Meeting
Feb. 22nd: 8:00pm LUTC Meeting

March

March 14th: 7:00pm General Meeting,
8:30pm Board Meeting
No SNACC or LUTC Meetings

Critic's Corner: Book Review of *The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels*

Review by Lily Pritchard (Sunnyside Environmental School 2nd grader)

The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels (352 pages) by Beth Lincoln is a suspenseful book about murder. All the Swifts' names mean other words. The main character is Shenanigan Swift. She and her sister Phenomena try to figure out who the murderer is. I recommend this book for kids who are okay with really tense and scary parts and murder. You should not read this book to a preschooler or a kindergartener. It was a really good book.

Want to see your name in print? We are looking for Sunnyside-based students to submit reviews of books, restaurants, food carts, movies or anything else that your fellow Sunnyside residents might enjoy knowing about. Please submit ideas to Hannah at hannahmwallace@gmail.com.

Getting to Know Your Neighbors
By Mike Thelin, SNA Board Member

Q&A with the Vuong Family at Annam VL

Portland is home to many wonderful Vietnamese restaurants, but those owned by the Vuong and Luu family are probably the most well known—both in Portland and beyond. With two James Beard nominations (Best Chef NW: 2017, 2018 and—breaking news!—2024) and accolades in publications from *Portland Monthly* to *Bon Appétit*, this family of self-described “professional home cooks” has for 20 years established a devoted following at their two locations Ha VL (2738 SE 82nd Avenue) and Rose VL (6424 SE Powell). In December, the family opened a third location, Annam VL (3336 SE Belmont), in the Sunnyside Neighborhood. We caught up with the family, the third generation of which is helping run the restaurants, in January to learn more.

Welcome to the neighborhood. Why did you choose the Sunnyside Neighborhood and Belmont Street?

Our original plan, which was heavily influenced by our mother, Christina Luu, was to open up the third VL restaurant in Beaverton. Unfortunately, the early times of COVID delayed many projects. With restaurants stabilized by early 2023, we began looking again. We wanted a more central Southeast Portland location and just happened to see a storefront for sale at the perfect time. We did restaurant renovations within about 30 days of receiving the keys—all with the help of our daughter and sons, extended family and significant others.

Tell us about your family’s culinary history in Portland restaurants. Also, what is signified by the “VL” in each of the restaurant names?

Ha VL was the first restaurant to open up in 2004 by our parents, William Vuong & Christina Luu, starting out as a Bánh Mì shop (Vietnamese sandwiches) and later evolved to feature *súp* (Vietnamese noodle soup). Our parents opened their second restaurant, Rose VL in 2015. The meals we serve are a reflection of our culture and the taste comes from the memories of our past. We like to call ourselves professional home cooks, as we mainly cook for our family and children. The VL initials are a representation of both surnames in the family, Vuong & Luu.



Phuong La Vuong & Han Vuong at the Grand Opening of their new restaurant on Belmont

Your restaurants have been written about locally and nationally in major food publications. What do you feel sets them apart?

We limit our *súp* in batches to focus on quality over quantity. Each broth is simmered for hours, and delicately seasoned. With a rotating *súp* menu, no main ingredient is recycled to keep our standards up. We have a rotating menu to show that there is more than just *Phở* for Vietnamese *súp*. Our menu is a way to educate others about *súp* from all different regions of Vietnam. Our influences are from north and south Vietnam, and even the combination between the two different regions.

Tell us about the menu and what to expect each day?

Our rotating menu is influenced by different regions of Vietnam. These are all family recipes we have enjoyed at the dinner table. With Portland’s growing diversity, we

are able to have access to more specialized ingredients in the last decade to help us cook and reminisce about our time back home. Our *súp* is heavily influenced by William’s Middle Vietnamese cooking style and Christina’s North Vietnamese cooking style. There are many other different regions, and even different family methods on the interpretation of traditional meals. There’s no right or wrong; it’s a matter of interpretation. What we bring to Annam VL is our presentation of our family’s *súp*, continuing to showcase traditional Vietnamese cuisine outside of the familiar.

How is business so far, and how has the neighborhood responded?

We are extremely grateful for the kindness, hospitality, and love from the Belmont neighborhood. During renovation we had our doors propped open for the small social gatherings, conversations, and shared meals we had from locals and neighboring stores. From the property management,

restaurants, tea shop, grocery store, bars, and much more, we are just overwhelmed with the support we have received. There is a true feel to the Belmont neighborhood that makes it feel like a community. The benefit of being able to converse with our guests and receive feedback helps our business. Annam VL did not anticipate such a crowd during the first few months of opening.

Do you have any plans for future restaurants in Portland, and are there other neighborhoods that you believe would be good for a restaurant?

As parents, we can only desire that our restaurant follows tradition and is passed down to future generations. While it’s exciting to think of new locations, we are focusing on the quality service we can provide and community building. Our schedule is currently full.

What are your favorite restaurants in Portland?

Our family has always loved visiting local restaurants of all cuisines—including food carts! We love our next door neighbors at Straight From New York Pizza for the quick bites. We really enjoyed the innovation and food done by Peter Cho & Sun Young over at Han Oak (511 NE 24th Ave). Our family treasures would be Jin Jin Deli (8220 SE Harrison) with our favorite items being *bánh bột Chiên* (fried dough cake), *cơm chiên cá mặn* (salty fish fried rice), and *Hủ Tiếu sa tế bò* (beef satay noodles). While we haven’t had the chance to visit many of the new Vietnamese restaurants that are opening throughout Portland, it’s inspiring to see how much Portland has progressed to have these local businesses.

Willamette Center Reopens After Renovations to Support Homeless Community

By Daniel Perez-Crouse

Located in SE Portland at 5120 SE Milwaukie Ave. at Mitchell St., The Willamette Center has returned after over a year of being closed and is now actively bringing in participants again to help with the Portland homeless crisis.

The Willamette Center is a 24-hour, low-barrier shelter for up to 120 adults that offers safety and services to regain stability and access permanent housing options. It is a reservation-only facility where participants are 18 and older, with priority for people 55 and older, those with disabilities and veterans. The programming is run by the

Transitions Project (an agency that helps people transition from homelessness to housing) and the building is owned by Multnomah County.

It originally opened in 2016 and touted innovative features setting it apart from other shelters at the time, such as serving couples and allowing them to stay together and sleep next to one another, instead of having to separate into single-gender facilities. The shelter also accommodates pets, offers hot meals every night and allows access to various other amenities like showers, community spaces with television and more.

Over a year ago, Multnomah County officials closed it for “renovations that were needed for the shelter to remain open, even without a state of emergency in effect, while also addressing issues that emerged in the years since the shelter opened.” As stated by the county, “The \$2.5 million renovation project included seismic and electrical upgrades, HVAC updates, and improvements to the shelter’s common areas.”

RJ DeMello, Senior Manager of Communications and Community Development with the Transitions Project, said the team was able to get into the space and start accepting participants on Monday, December 18. “We are trying to shoot for a pace of 15 or so a day ideally. It’s going to take probably a couple of weeks to get it to full capacity.”

When the facility closed last year, Transitions Project said no participants were displaced, but emptied it of staff which it has had to rebuild for its return. DeMello says some staff have returned, like their former shelter manager, but he says that they still had to build up a full team there—with new members brought in to specifically operate this current iteration of the shelter.

As for the team and their work, DeMello said, “It’s inspiring to see them and the effort they put into it. They realize that there are going to be 120 adults in there, but each one of them is an individual human being with a different story and a different background. They take it upon themselves to make sure they’re there for them and their needs.”

DeMello also noted that, within the last five years, the population served at the center has been getting older and that poses new challenges. This means more people might prefer bottom bunks and more need to take

into account medical equipment and other associated needs.

“It’s at a vital time getting 120 beds for 120 adults when the weather is getting colder. It’s a really important part of our continuum of care and we’re excited to be back there to be able to offer this space and hope that we can do a positive job there and help people on their journey and into permanent housing,” DeMello said.

Those interested in requesting a bed at the shelter can call 503.280.4700, visit the Transition Projects Resource Center at 650 NW Irving St., or fill out their online form at tprojects.org/shelter-access-pre-screening-form.

If you want to support and donate goods to the shelter, you can see a wishlist of their most needed items at tprojects.org/donate.

Originally published in The Southeast Examiner, January 2024

The Sunnyside Neighborhood News is published monthly by the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association.

Newsletter Coordinator: Eric Miller
Editor: Gloria Jacobs
Layout: Andy Prince

Delivery Coordinator: Diana Deumling

Chris Waldmann President
Hannah Wallace Vice President
Kendra Hansen Treasurer
Eric Miller Secretary
Andru Morgan Director-at-Large
Mike Thelin Director-at-Large
Cole White Director-at-Large

SunnysidePortland.org
c/o SEUL, 3534 SE Main, Portland, OR 97214

Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing newsletter@sunnysideportland.org. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior.** Many wonderful volunteer Sunnyside residents distribute the Neighborhood News.

Live near any of the blocks marked in black below? We need your help!
Contact dianadeumling@gmail.com to volunteer for our delivery service.

**Delivery help
needed here**



try

