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Democrat Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler spoke out about his experience managing the city during the infamous [2020 Antifa-BLM riots](#), in which he was viciously targeted by Antifa militants outside the federal courthouse when he attempted to virtue signal to the unruly social justice mob. Wheeler, who opted not to seek reelection and has only a few weeks remaining in office, told Eye on Northwest Politics in an [interview](#) on Monday that he is ready to permanently turn the page on his political career after serving 18 years in public office.

Wheeler said that he regrets not clearly distinguishing between far-left Antifa extremists who seized social justice protests and nonviolent peaceful participants. Rioting in Portland went on for over 100 consecutive nights that summer.

While the city of Roses faces immense challenges, including an ongoing public safety, homeless, and drug crisis, as well as a \$27 million budget deficit, Mayor Wheeler stated that his successor, Keith Wilson, will face a "steep learning curve" similar to his own, explaining that it is impossible to prepare him for unexpected challenges that could arise, such as the 2020 Antifa-

BLM riots and the COVID-19 pandemic. The pair have been working closely together on the transition to form the city's new government at the start of 2025.



Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler was targeted by Antifa militants and BLM rioters outside of the federal courthouse. Courtesy: Andy Ngo

In 2020, the George Floyd demonstrations significantly damaged Portland's reputation and, consequently, Wheeler's reputation as Mayor. Following months of rioting by Antifa and Black Lives Matter protesters, the Trump administration proclaimed the city an " [Anarchist Jurisdiction](#) " and sent federal forces to restore law and order. While Wheeler was harshly criticized for his ineffective response to the riots, he stated in the interview that there was just one thing he would have done differently.

"I think what I wish had happened was people could have made the same difference that I was between people who were protesting peacefully out there with their families demanding more accountability and some basic police reforms, versus people who were there clearly to commit acts of criminal destruction and violence," Wheeler said. "I was able to make the differentiation early on that I think took the community a little bit longer to see that we were talking about two fundamentally different groups who needed fundamentally different responses."

Wheeler said his leadership during the infamous riots impacted his personal life and family. He allowed the [riots to rage on](#) for months, and when Mayor Wheeler went to virtue signal to the social justice mob outside of the federal courthouse, he was [maced in the face](#) by police after being targeted by Antifa militants, who then launched a firebombing attack on his upscale Pearl District home.

"I was born and raised in this community. I have plenty of friends here, plenty of support and so it was strange to find myself being a true pariah in the community," Wheeler recanted. "I had people on the far right saying I was a member of Antifa, and they selectively showed shots from that time I went down to meet with the protesters as proof that I was in Antifa, standing at the gate, attacking the federal building."

"Then I had people on the far-left, those who actually were in Antifa, calling me a clone of Donald Trump," he continued. "So we had sort of these two completely divergent views of who I was. It was hard to have my home firebombed, to have my daughter threatened and chased to school, to have my tires slashed, to have people standing in front of my house. On some nights, it would be people on the far left. On other nights, it would be people holding rifles in front of my daughter's bedroom window. Nobody should have to put up with that."

Mayor Wheeler said it's now time to turn the page on his political career.

"I am burned out. I need time away. I need to recharge my batteries. I need to turn the page and I'd frankly like to do something different than in politics now for 18 years," he said. "That's a lot longer than I thought I would be in elective office. I'll still be involved in the community, but I think it's time for me to turn this over to the next generation of people who have more energy, more ideas, who want to build on the work that we've done and take it potentially in new and exciting directions."

In November, Portland voters elected Democrat Keith Wilson to succeed Wheeler as mayor. Wilson is a businessman who has pledged to improve public safety in the city, a key concern among voters this election cycle. However, restoring law and order will come as a challenge after certain districts rejected moderate candidates in favor of anti-police progressives.

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