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ELSEWHERE MAN

An interview with author and sociologist Dalton Conley on the new world of middle class

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PHOTO COURTESY OF YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Dennis Lundberg with Janus Youth participates in the Street Count to assess how many people are homeless in Portland.

Sight unseen

City's count of people on the street finds some, but misses the broad scope of modern homeless demographics

BY MARA GRUNBAUM
STAFF WRITER

"Want to fill out a survey?" asked outreach worker Brandon Schwanz of a young man on a bench outside the downtown library. "It's so we can get an idea of how many people are homeless in the city."

The kid laughed.
"Good luck!"

The streets may be a statistician's nightmare. Still, every two years, Portland conducts the One Night Street Count to try to quantify the city's homeless population. Over the last week of January, outreach workers surveyed people they found on streets, under bridges, in parks and in campgrounds. Social-service providers surveyed their clients. The one-page street count form collects demographic data and the answer to one primary question: Where did you, or where will you, spend the night of Wednesday, Jan. 28?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mandates the street count, and the simultaneous One Night Shelter Count, from any community that receives federal funding for housing and social service programs. The counts also give local policymakers feedback on how well their 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness is working.

The last Portland street count, in 2007, found 1,438 people sleeping outside. The shelter count, which is administered by Multnomah County, found 3,018 people in shelters, transitional housing or emergency rent assistance programs.

Schwanz works for Yellow Brick Road, an outreach team that targets Portland's homeless

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Document fee proposal returns with reinforcements

BY JOANNE ZUHL
STAFF WRITER

Housing advocates are returning to the Oregon Legislature with a familiar request: Raise the document recording fee to establish a stable and sustainable funding source to house the state's poor.

But much has changed economically since a similar bill came a hair's breadth away from passing in 2007. Still, the bill's supporters are hopeful that regardless of the dismal economic forecast, — and even because of it — a steady income for affordable housing will make a difference.

HB 2436, the current document recording fee proposal, would raise fees for recording certain documents from \$11 to \$26, and channel the revenue to affordable housing programs for low-income, disabled and minority residents. It is currently in the committee process and will require a three-fifths majority vote of the House

and Senate to pass.

The bill not only has the support of housing advocates, which have for years been pushing for a sustained funding source for housing the poor, but it also has the backing from private industry groups, including the Oregon Realtors Association, Oregon Bankers Association, Oregon Homebuilders Association.

"The elected in Salem understand that this is an idea that has all the impacted parties around the table in agreement and it's something that's going to provide real relief for Oregonians right now," says Michael Anderson, executive director with Oregon Opportunity Network, which represents a host of low-income housing developers in the state.

The two years since the measure failed have cost revenue, Anderson acknowledges, but it's never too late, and declining markets will recover; in good times and in bad times — people buy and sell homes.

"The numbers are down from what they were when the real estate market was hot and property was changing all the time," Anderson says. "But for one, it would still would bring significant money to bear, and two, the activity will return in the real estate sector, and at that point we'll see a higher amount of return."

Two years ago, when the document fee bill was initially proposed, the formula was projected to bring in about \$60 million. The latest figures project the fee will create a \$14 million pool for affordable housing programs over the next two years.

"It's not as much money as we need. We're very up front about that," says Janet Byrd,

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— JANET BYRD
DIRECTOR, NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS, THE HOUSING ALLIANCE

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