

EDITORIAL

Spend urban renewal on real renewal

The city of Portland is pushing the idea of using \$42 million – mostly from Portland Urban Renewal funds – to build a minor league baseball stadium in Lents. Bad idea.

The citizens of Portland already are on the hook for \$30 million from the last stadium. How can the city justify spending another \$42 million on another stadium? We can't.

The Portland Beavers play 72 home games a year. Each game lasts two to four hours. That's an average of about 216 hours a year. That equals about one full workweek a month for five months. And most of the jobs at the stadium are low-wage jobs with no benefits. Hardly an investment in the local community, it's a slap in the face to average Portlanders to serve a man who doesn't even live here. Urban renewal investments need a better payoff for Portland

than a baseball stadium.

The city of Portland is currently considering relaxing the 30 percent set aside policy for the Lents Urban Renewal District in order to fund the stadium.

Whether or not readers support baseball in Lents, taking the funds slated for housing for families and seniors does not make sense. Considering Portland's long history of gentrification, this deal would almost certainly drive poor and working folk out of the neighborhood.

The new light rail that will help bolster east Portland will improve Lents and many neighborhoods that traditionally have not been prioritized by Portland's elite. Lents has the chance to become one of Portland's coolest neighborhoods – much like the University/Portsmouth, Concordia and Mississippi neighborhoods in North and Northeast. If the Beavers move to Lents, the stadium will actually become a symbol of what is wrong with the neighborhood.

If we are investing public funds in Lents and surrounding neighborhoods, we should be investing in local affordable-housing efforts, small business startups and improvements. Helping attract a grocery store such as New Seasons, for example, would do more in the short- and long-term for the neighborhood than a baseball stadium.

Street Roots is not against baseball being in our region. Possibly our neighbors in Vancouver or Beaverton would benefit from such a deal. We just can't see spending \$42 million on something that doesn't pay off and isn't really wanted by the majority of Portlanders.

Street Roots supports much of the great work that the city of Portland, the Portland Development Commission and other interest groups have done to make Portland a livable city. Saying that, we also know that the same engine that has created a livable city for some has affected poor folks and minorities over the years in a negative way. We can't let the latter happen again, especially in a time when Portland needs long-term sustainable jobs and innovative ideas to lead us out of the economic downturn we all find ourselves in. Baseball in Lents is not one of them.

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The views expressed in the editorials in Street Roots are the consensus of members of the editorial board and contributing volunteers.

The Guard Home Campaign is too important to fail

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE GUARD HOME CAMPAIGN

It's been almost a year since the Keep the Oregon National Guard in Oregon campaign began. We've gone from gathering signatures on petitions to keep 3500 Oregon National Guard members from being sent to Iraq to 1) having peace-activists deliver 7200 petitions to every OR legislator, 2) introducing a House bill (HB2556) in Salem with many co-sponsors, 3) having a hearing in the House Rules Committee with no public opposition, 4) marching in Salem plus lobbying the next day, 5) getting support from county political parties, and 6) getting constituents statewide send E-letters.

What have been the results of all this work? Well, the Rules chair never scheduled a committee vote after two months. You probably read in The Oregonian about a series of deployments saying good-bye to 2600 Oregonian National Guard before they were sent back to Georgia for final training prior to flying to Iraq. Well, we lost round one, but we haven't failed. There's still another 800 Oregonian National Guard due to go to Iraq next year. And we've had other important achievements.

While the campaign team was lobbying, our lead sponsor, Rep. Chip Shields (a liberal) got more Democrats as co-sponsors or simply supporters. Then a conservative member of the GOP, Rep. Dennis Richardson joined the campaign, and these two representatives forged a strong bond. They agreed on a minor amendment to HB2556 which gained support in both parties. With too many bills, it is frequently hard to get bi-partisan support in this as well as many other states in addition to Congress. When the media heard about this wonderful pair of representatives recently, OPB, as well as Air America commented on it. Plus, there were favorable articles in several newspapers.

This bi-partisan support encouraged the campaign team and maybe even the Rules Committee. There was even an idea that

the committee would send our bill to the House for a vote if the campaign team could assure the committee that we would get a majority "yes" vote in the House. Little did they know how that possibility would motivate us to redouble our efforts. After several more weeks of intense lobbying, we were sure that 32 of 60 representatives would support HB2556.

The effect of Oregon's campaign has also influenced other states, according to the national "Bring the Guard Home; It's the Law." There were just a few states last year that were challenging the authorizations that Congress passed to send the Guard to Iraq and Afghanistan. Now there are 22 states and the District of Columbia working on this. No state has gotten as far with their bill as ours, however. One, New York State, tried a petition campaign but could not get as many signatures as we did in Oregon. They wanted to know how we got so many signatures when we were using volunteers!

We're trying some new things. By the time the next Street Roots is published, we will have had a press conference on the Capitol steps in Salem on Wednesday, May 27, in between the historical date of May 30 for Memorial Day and this year's observance of it on May 25. We are inviting veterans, churches and other faith groups, members of the armed forces as well as just plain folks to come; Cindy Sheehan is one of the speakers. We urge you to telephone or e-mail the Rules Committee Chair, Rep. Arnie Roblan (503-986-1409, rep. arnieroblan@state.or.us), and Speaker of the House Dave Hunt (503-986-1200, rep. davehunt@state.or.us), to ask them to bring HB2556 to the House for a vote. We want to pass HB2556 in the House to encourage other states to challenge sending their state's National Guard to Iraq and Afghanistan.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Street Roots encourages readers to submit letters and columns for publication. Letters to the editor may be submitted to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, faxed to 503-227-3117 or e-mailed to streetroots@email.com. Please address your submissions as letters to the editor.

Genesis Redux

by Dharma Bum

The first man
 Urban and wild
 The hum of traffic
 The music of the city
 Rivers of asphalt
 Canyons of concrete
 This is the jungle
 This is Eden
 Under skies of wonder
 We stand at the cross roads
 With Infinity below our feet
 As we wiggle our toes in a dream.

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