

Local street count shows increase in homelessness

STAFF REPORTS

The City of Portland and Multnomah County are showing an overall increase in people experiencing homelessness.

The latest 2011 Point-in-time count conducted by the city and county showed 2,727 people who were homeless — meaning sleeping in emergency shelter, vouchered into motels or sleeping outdoors. An additional 1,928 people were sleeping in transitional housing on the night of the count, bringing the total number of individuals and families to 4,655.

Levels of homelessness in Multnomah County were 7 to 9 percent higher compared with recent counts in 2009 and 2010.

Several disturbing trends are highlighted in the report, including that the number of unsheltered families with children has risen 35 percent.

"I am very concerned about the growing number of families with children on the streets and in shelters," says County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury. "While this report shows that we have increased the availability of emergency shelter, we can and must do better for the families in our community. Our hope is that every family who comes to us in crisis is safe, off the street and back into a home as quickly as possible."

Another sign that gentrification and the lack of equity across the city is having an effect are that populations of color made up 46 percent of the homeless population compared to only 29 percent of the overall population. The report notes that the over-representation is especially high for Native and African Americans.

Twelve percent of the homeless population in Portland and Multnomah County are U.S. Veterans.

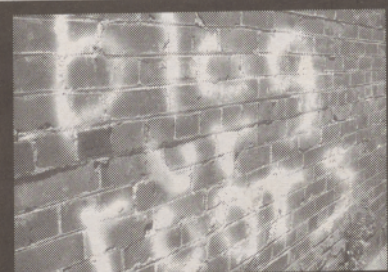
The city and county report comes on the heels of statewide cuts to human services, and a recent report from the State of Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services showing an overall increase in homelessness of 29 percent.

The reports are mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and help determine future funding for housing and homeless services dollars.

CORRECTION

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to streetrootsnews@gmail.com.

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PHOTO BY ISRAEL BAYER

Interstate and beyond

Lessons of history resonate as the city prepares to expand the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area

BY JAKE THOMAS
STAFF WRITER

Roslyn Hill can no longer quite visualize the neighborhood she grew up in. Probably because it doesn't exist anymore.

While in the third grade, in the mid 1950s, her family had to leave their neighborhood in Northeast Portland to make way for development that would become the Memorial Coliseum.

The construction of the stadium has been part of the vexed history between the city and North and Northeast Portland. But the 64-year-old African American real estate developer with greying dreadlocks seems hardly bitter when recalling how her family was forced from their home. Instead she seems more focused on the commercial properties she's been developing in Northeast Portland since moving back to the city in 1990 after a stint in the Bay Area.

Hill has been part of a renewed economic interest in Alberta Street and the surrounding area and has developed properties into coffee shops and art galleries. Today, the once gritty and crime-ridden street that is now better known for its eateries, boutiques and the creative types that have been drawn to it in recent decades.

Called the "Queen of Alberta" by some, Hill hopes that the revitalization will help transform the area into a vibrant neighborhood that retains its multicultural character while drawing newcomers who are genuinely vested in it.

But, according to Hill, Alberta isn't reaching its full commercial potential and large chunks of it remain "underdeveloped" and could use the help of a powerful city agency that has big plans for the street and other parts of North and Northeast Portland that have followed a similar trajectory.

The Portland Development Commission, the city's economic development arm, has had an uneasy relationship with North and Northeast Portland, a part of town that has been the heart of Portland's African American community and has suffered from

racially motivated disinvestment in the past.

Part of the uneasiness stems from the PDC aiding Emanuel Hospital's expansion in the 1960s and 70s, which resulted in the displacement of many black-owned homes and businesses. In recent decades, North and Northeast have become whiter and more affluent, while residents with deeper roots in the area have left, seeking cheaper rents on Portland's periphery.

In more recent years, the city's use of urban renewal has been blamed for amplifying that gentrification. The latest census figures for 2010 shows that in the past decade approximately 10,000 people of color, primarily African Americans, moved away from the city's core, particularly the inner North and Northeast communities.

A recent report for the PDC by Northwest Ideas, based on interviews with opinion leaders in North and Northeast Portland, stated, "It would be hard to overstate the distrust of the PDC and City government in the Black community."

Now the PDC wants to expand urban renewal deeper into North and Northeast Portland. In July, City Council will consider giving the final approval on the expansion of the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area to encompass even more of the neighborhoods traditionally home to people of color, but growing less so with each passing year.

The Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area, created in 2000, is the largest urban renewal area in the city, sprawling about 3,800 acres and spanning 10 neighborhoods in North and Northeast Portland. The expansion will increase the roughly \$202.8 million in urban renewal funds currently available in ICURA to \$221.3 million through 2021. That infusion, says the PDC, will create 960 jobs. The expansion of ICURA would encompass about 430 acres of "underdeveloped" property in need of "rehabilitation" along Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Alberta and Killingsworth Streets, the St. Johns Town Center and the south side of Lombard

Street.

"The expansion of the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area will allow PDC to extend their programs and services to even more neighborhood businesses, to help them remain stable or to expand and make improvements that lead to job creation," said Mayor Sam Adams, who has spearheaded a proactive and sometimes controversial applications of URAs "For example, by utilizing PDC's programs, Por Que No on North Mississippi was able to expand their seating area, and in turn hire additional staff. By expanding the ICURA to other commercial corridors, we hope to be able to do the same for many other neighborhood businesses."

The planning for this expansion dates back to 2008 as part of the North/Northeast Economic Development Initiative. It includes placing some property of the Oregon Convention Center in ICURA and allows for reinvestment in the Rose Quarter.

So far, it seems feelings from the stakeholders on the expansion are mixed, but there is strong support for it — from surprising sources. Many in the African American community and others, want in on this new round of urban renewal.

"They do do something," said Hill of the PDC, of which she's had largely positive experiences, "but you have to bring something to the table. They're not going to throw money at you."

Hill has used the PDC's financing tools for some of her properties on a stretch of Alberta Street located in the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area. She said she supports the PDC's plan to extend urban renewal on Alberta up to 33rd Avenue, which she hopes will help fill-in underdeveloped patches and kick start small businesses.

Adrienne Livingston, the executive director of the Black United Fund, is also supportive of the expansion that would put her organization's headquarters, located on 29th Avenue and Alberta Street, in ICURA.

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