

With the primary election right around the corner, Street Roots asked the leading mayoral and City Council candidates one question:

If elected, what three things will you do to improve the state of homelessness and affordable housing in Portland?

Mayor



Eileen Brady

The measure of a great city is how it takes care of its most vulnerable people. As mayor, I will work with Multnomah County Commission Chair Cogen and City Commissioner Nick Fish to strengthen the partnership between Portland and Multnomah County to better integrate and coordinate services for homelessness and affordable

housing. I will also support and leverage the great work of established organizations such as Outside In, Central City Concern, JOIN, pear and others.

As mayor I will take action on:

1. Faster progress on Portland's homelessness plan. By one count, we have over 700 homeless children in Portland. This is unacceptable and I have announced a plan to begin work immediately. Also, to stem the problem, we need to keep more families in their homes. Foreclosure should be a last option.
2. Fund mental health services. By better coordinating our public safety budgets and sunseting tax abatements for urban renewal areas, we'll generate more funds for mental health services. This is vital because a high percentage of our long-term homeless population lacks access to adequate mental health care. I am proud of my leadership to help secure health care for 94,000 Oregon children. I'll bring the same level of commitment to helping our homeless populations get the care they need.
3. Create sustainable job opportunities to support people, families and the community. We cannot claim to be a truly progressive city with an unemployment rate of 8 percent — a figure that excludes many who have given up on finding a job altogether. My commitment is to growing more family wage jobs with benefits and to increase our tax base to fund vital services. I have spent 25 years building progressive organizations with good jobs and benefits in Portland. I'll provide the leadership. We can do this together.



Charlie Hales

To succeed, you need a place to call home. We — as a city, a county, and a region — have a responsibility to connect the homeless and home insecure to resources and social services. This includes day centers, supportive housing, residential treatment, and rent support.

As mayor, I will streamline the development review process for affordable housing from conception to construction. I will ensure that our development review process is not a barrier to creating affordable housing.

Second, I will look for opportunities to partner with local agencies and businesses specifically around supportive housing concepts. Supportive housing programs that combine accessible housing and support services have proven successful and cost-effective in helping people stabilize and reclaim their lives as productive members of society. I will continue to support the tax increment financing (TIF) set-aside from urban renewal districts and push for changes that allow TIF dollars to go beyond building new housing to include support services.

Third, I will push Metro to re-embrace affordable housing, as it did before, as a top priority for the region. I will try to reset the confused, and sometimes even adversarial relationship between the city and county that has existed for years around roles and responsibilities. It has not been healthy and has done a great disservice to Portland's most vulnerable populations. Too often, we have thought about administrative turf when we should be only thinking of our responsibility to the people and families that deserve to live in dignity.



Jefferson Smith

Far too many people in our city struggle to find a decent place to live. Safe, decent and stable housing is a cornerstone of a healthy society, yet close to 5,000 people experience homelessness in Portland, while many more are displaced from their neighborhoods. We can do something about that. A few places to start:

I support a significant permanent source of funding for housing, like a housing bond. We can provide thousands of construction jobs, and make safe, decent housing available for seniors, people on disability, and other low-income people.

Foreclosure is traumatic. It is devastating financially and emotionally for people who lose their homes, and it brings with it huge costs for the community. This year, I championed fair foreclosure reforms in the State House that will end dual-track foreclosure and force banks to meet with homeowners.

But we can do more. I'll work to use funds from the recent settlement against the banks who got us into this mess to help get us out. We can seed an investment fund to buy troubled mortgages from lenders at a steep discount and help people stay in their homes. Read more on my website.

Right now we have a city that works for some of us, but not all of us. Making Portland the city that works for everyone, in every neighborhood, regardless of income, color or geography, is my No. 1 priority. I'll prioritize front-line services, not multi-billion dollar bridge boondoggles or tax breaks for corporations and developers that we can't afford.

City Council: Position 4

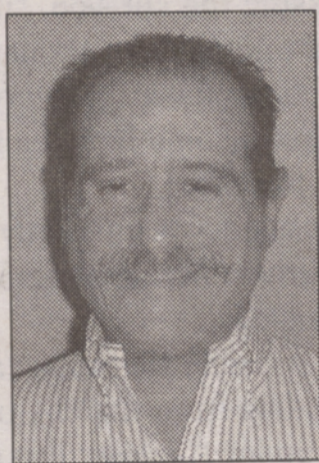


Steve Novick

I will support efforts by homeless Portlanders to help themselves, like Dignity Village and Right 2 Dream Too. Communities of homeless people who are prepared to build their own shelters on private property and adopt and enforce their own rules against crime and drug abuse should be supported, not discouraged.

I will lobby the legislature to allow inclusionary zoning in Oregon municipalities. The 30 percent set-aside in urban renewal areas and tax abatements are useful tools, but with public resources diminishing, the city needs to be able to require, rather than just subsidize, affordable housing in new development.

If federal health reform stays in place, I will ensure that city bureaus work with county and state offices and with health care providers to ensure that adults newly eligible for expanded Medicaid are enrolled and receive health care (including mental health and addiction) and related services. The fire and police bureaus are obvious examples of bureaus that should be looking to identify and enroll people eligible for expanded Medicaid.



Mark White

Organize staff in my office so that specific issues receive additional advocacy and support. I will ensure that homelessness and housing is included.

- Advocate for a housing levy to supplement existing housing efforts and allow us to focus more effort toward the resolution of homelessness.

- Focus on job creation and economic development efforts on

those who are typically marginalized in terms of employment.



Jeri Williams

As someone who has been homeless in Portland, this is one of the most important issues we face. We are not sustainable when our people are suffering and going without the basic human needs for everyone in our community.

First, I will support and push for more dollars for our safety net.

Second, I will bring together a committee of stakeholders with the most important voices being

those of the homeless themselves, those being most directly affected by the decisions made. They will also have the most comprehensive ideas for solutions. We are going to have to work outside any box that ever existed and create a new way of looking at housing and homelessness.

With long and closed waiting lists, it is clear we do not have enough affordable, low income and shelter for Portlanders. We must do more to increase our housing stock as well as spread it equitably across all 95 neighborhoods in Portland. Creating poverty pockets only in certain areas is defeating our efforts to deal with this and we need inclusionary zoning.

I would like to see the Oregon Trail Card have a chip installed with a free or low cost bus pass to address the transportation issue in Portland as well.

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