

## EDITORIAL

Future leaders could learn  
from following priorities

It's not a given that our elected representatives will prioritize housing in today's political climate. Multnomah County is fortunate to have leaders that recognize that without a safety net for housing and homeless services, we can't be a truly progressive society.

In this year's budget process, still mired in the economic slump, Mayor Sam Adams and County Chair Jeff Cogen have continued to set a standard that our friends and neighbors in need are a priority. And that setting priorities means more than lip service and a positive spin. It's something the current slate of candidates should keep in mind.

**If we as a community don't find a way, all the sustainability centers and green buildings and alternative transportation modes in the world won't matter — at least not for middle-class Portlanders who call this city their home today.**

However, we still have much work to do. The lack of jobs, a sputtering economy and a broken tax system means hard working Oregonians continue to be priced out of the housing market. Those even less fortunate find themselves on the brink of homelessness or actually sleeping outdoors. These hard realities are documented in the current

edition of Street Roots with the cover story on the impacts of the foreclosure crisis in our neighborhoods, where empty homes are laid to waste. It's also heard in the trembling voices of families who call 211info and find themselves at the end of their ropes.

Many people are fortunate to never find themselves in such a circumstance. And yet too many individuals and families find themselves on the edge, that indescribable place foreign to most Portlanders, a surreal moment swallowed by the reality of losing everything. Logic is lost. Rational thought disappears. Trauma, despair — survival mode set in.

To say how much we appreciate the city and county prioritizing housing is sincere. But to claim victory would be short-sighted. After years of budget cuts, there is still a hole in the bucket. Homeownership relief hangs in the balance, important programs funded under the Portland Children's Levy are on the brink, and securing sustainable funding for affordable housing continues to be the question of the day, the month and the election year.

In the mid-90s Portland set a goal to achieve 5,183 affordable housing units downtown, the same number we had in 1978. Today, according to Northwest Pilot Project's inventory, we have 1,200 fewer units available than when we set the goal.

In order to change course, we need bold leadership that is willing to push beyond the tired boundaries. We're not just talking about government leaders. We're talking about business and civic leaders downtown who are more than willing to sit at the table and give money to specific programs, when what is really needed is big picture thinking on housing and homelessness.

We need a dedicated funding source beyond our current options to support hard-working Portlanders, and those down on their luck. If we as a community don't find a way, all the sustainability centers and green buildings and alternative transportation modes in the world won't matter — at least not for middle-class Portlanders who call this city their home today. It will be a land of only the rich and poor. And Portland will be anything but progressive in the decades to come.

## The power of hope drives and connects us all

"It feels good when you have peace in your life," says Willie Bradford, a Street Roots vendor. "We all have problems, but I never give up on hope. That's one of

my things: Never give up on hope for nothing."

You can never underestimate hope and what it can do for people. Beyond the income that vendors obtain through your support, it's hope that

that we have a platform and an important role to play in the community.

We believe in both individual and social change. We believe in creating a platform for people, regardless of their lot in life or past experiences, and recognizing that we all have something to contribute to society. Maybe it's a poem, maybe it's a smile, possibly it's a bit of street wisdom and just having a familiar face to say "hi" each morning.

"Street Roots has really been a blessing to me," says Cynthia who sells at NW 23rd and Hoyt. "Before I started with Street Roots I was down and out, and I was homeless and not doing too good, and I just felt lost. Having Street Roots in my life has helped me have purpose. I'm doing this not only for myself, but it's a gift from God to help me in my heart. I'm a people person."

That's what I'm talking about it. We are all different at Street Roots, with different backgrounds and experiences and beliefs, and some of us are down and out. But that doesn't stop us. There's hope and ultimately, love. And there's nothing more powerful than love.

DIRECTOR'S  
DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org

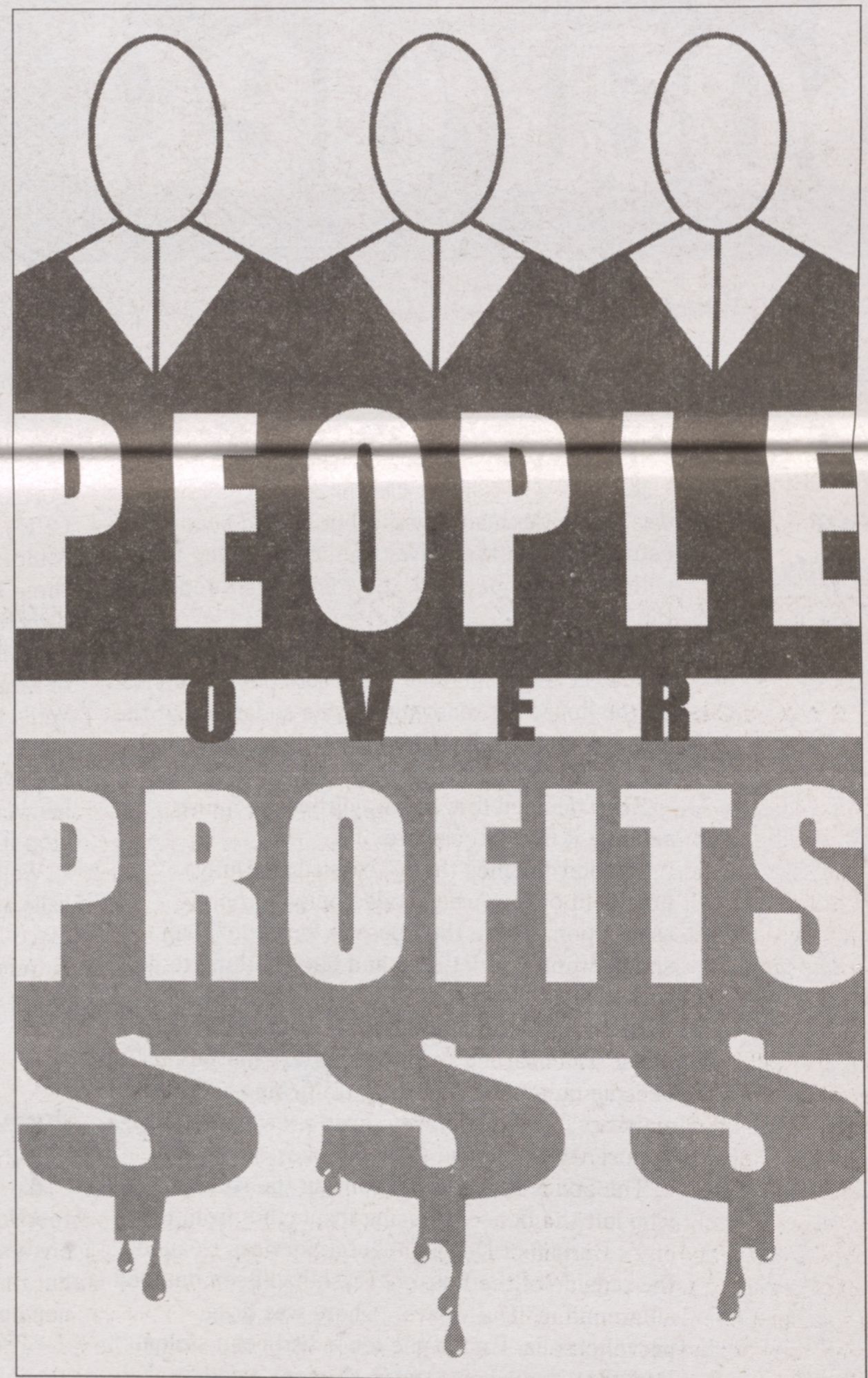
makes the vendor program a worthwhile venture for many individuals and families.

The conversations and relationships built with many of you each day is something that many vendors hold onto the most. Time and again, vendors come into the office and talk about readers and how much they brighten their days.

Way back when, former housing advocate and City Commissioner Erik Sten said that Street Roots was changing the face of homelessness in Portland. We believe that holds true more now than ever. We know

WHAT DO  
YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or by e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org.



By A. Wong

## Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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## Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting an order of the Rose City Resource for distribution, please write to pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

## Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



**75c**  
goes directly to the vendor  
who sold you the paper

**25c**  
goes toward  
printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.