

EDITORIAL

Prioritizing housing locally
sends national message

According to the Western Regional Advocacy Project, "The Obama administration's 2013 budget request for public housing, Housing Choice vouchers, and Section 8 project-based rental assistance is \$1.7 billion below 2012's grossly underfunded spending bill. The automatic cuts to discretionary programs authorized by the Budget Control Act beginning in January 2013 will tighten the noose even more. Rising rents coupled with even deeper cuts signal that the nation's most affordable

housing is in peril at a time when millions of people can least afford it."

Under this top-down pressure, it's not a given that local communities will prioritize housing. In fact, in many communities, housing and homeless services are not prioritized at all.

Yes, the Obama administration and Congress have done some good things on the homeless front, specifically for homeless veterans, but when you take a global

outlook, nothing much has changed, except more cuts to critical homeless and housing services.

Under this top-down pressure, it's not a given that local communities will prioritize housing. In fact, in many communities, housing and homeless services are not prioritized at all.

Yet, buoyed by a citywide, grassroots campaign, "I Support the Portland Safety Net," Portland has done exactly that. It has preserved \$4.8 million in one-time funding for emergency shelter for people on the streets, and short-term rent assistance to keep people from falling through the cracks.

But the bigger news was one of process: The city has — after years of putting its most vulnerable citizens at the mercy discretionary and unstable one-time funding practices — reclassified the safety net from being a budgetary after-thought to an ongoing funding priority. Kudos are in order.

Multnomah County should also be given props for prioritizing the safety net. In many ways, the entire county budget is a safety net. Finding the money to fund critical projects related to homelessness and housing isn't easy. Many programs have seen cuts, but leaders at the county continue to do their best to hold the line.

By prioritizing housing as a community, ultimately we are prioritizing our public safety, schools, health and equity. Yet gentrification remains a dragon at the gate. Thousands of people continue to be priced out of the city, out of their homes and on to the streets.

In order to stop the bleeding locally, we have to find a long-term revenue stream for housing. There's simply no other choice. Having both the City of Portland and Multnomah County rise to the occasion takes us one step closer to that vision.

Concerning state and federal lawmakers: It feels like there's no end in sight. We hope that housing will be prioritized, but have little faith that the reforms and changes needed will patch the hole in the bucket before more are lost. Until that day, we as a community must carry on and do the best we can. We believe we live in a city that can do just that.

Making change, every day

The Street Roots Summer Rally is rocking and rolling and we need your support now more than ever. The rally is online at www.rally.streetroots.org,

or you can just Google Street Roots Summer Rally. It's a great way for people to participate and give to the organization this spring and help us blast into summer.

We know that many people support Street

Roots and vendors each week with a purchase of the newspaper, but in order to deliver to you a great publication we need your support to help with the operations of the organization.

Your support goes toward helping Street Roots maintain a quality journalistic platform that highlights the voices on the streets and lets countless organizations deliver their message and discuss important issues with 15,000 readers every two weeks.

In these hard times, free speech and real dialogue take place through the media. Your support means that 300 people experiencing homelessness and poverty will gain an income each year through the sales of the newspaper. On its face, this may not seem like much. In reality, it means

preventing and ending people's homelessness each day. It means offering hope to individuals and families that have literally nowhere else to turn.

Beyond the newspaper and vendor program, we play a leading role on the housing and homeless front in advocacy. This spring alone, we have helped lead a campaign (along with partners) to secure \$4.8 million for housing and homeless services for the city of Portland. We also published the region's first homeless deaths report with the intent to expand the report next year and eventually offer the region a strategy to help prevent homeless deaths in the future.

Street Roots believes in solutions. We believe that together we can change the way people think about and take action on poverty issues, from immigration and race to foreclosures and alternative funding streams for affordable housing. We are a small and flexible organization that dreams big, and works small to get the job done.

We need your support this summer to stay that way! Please support us online at the Street Roots Summer Rally, or by sending a donation to 211 NW Davis, Portland, OR. 97209. We guarantee your support will create real change for individuals and the community every single day.



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DIRECTOR'S
DESK

By Israel Bayer

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.

Nancy's Letter

I hate the things that happen in my life sometimes. I go through so much crap, whether it's me or it's just shit that bad forces bring to my plate.

I hate it. I feel like I have to keep picking myself up, and even at the end of the day, I clean and wipe the scratches and scrapes that life brings to my path that the world gives to me.

I feel like I have come this far and I have a place in this crazy world that I need to fight for. Like everyone else, I have dreams and hopes, but I ask myself what I truly believe in and what it's worth before I get my hands dirty.

Because of the mistakes that I have made in the past, I have learned to try my best, not fall in the trap of misery and dead ends.

I believe that we all have choices to make all the time. They never stop. We can make the right choices and the bad ones, but I personally learned to be a strong and independent woman.

I have overcome poverty, an abusive family, domestic violence, a drug addiction. And now at this point of my life, all I can do is look forward and expand my path of opportunities and open doors for myself that only I can.

I want to know that I have gotten to a better chapter in my life with the struggles that only I know I have had to deal with. I am a strong believer of things happen for a reason.

I am more than happy to be in my skin even, though sometimes I hate the things that happen to me, but only my eyes and soul know the truth of my life and where I take it.

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.



75¢

goes directly to the vendor
who sold you the paper

25¢

goes toward
printing costs

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