

## EDITORIAL

## Funding package for women essential for success

The number can stop you in your tracks. 122. It's six hours before darkness and you're number 122 on the list to get into the Salvation Army's emergency women's shelter. You're homeless, and you've just made a break from your abuser. With the kindness of strangers, a phone, and a safe room you find hope.

And then you find out you're number 122, and that was the one place that actually put you on a list. The other calls to shelters yielded only apologies.

That happened just recently at Street Roots. We gave the woman a bus pass to the Gateway Center out at 103rd Avenue. Once on the train, her abuser tried to come at her, but he was kept off long enough until the doors

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closed. Once at Gateway, a plan forward could begin, but she still had to find her own shelter for the night, and she eventually stayed at a friend's apartment. It was only for the night. We haven't seen her since, and that

was over a week ago.

While we hope that she's moved on, maybe escaped her abuser with distance, we know that she is far from alone. There are nearly 1,000 women sleeping on local streets or in shelters every night, up 22 percent over the last time such a count was conducted in 2011. The city has two women's shelters with a combined capacity of 154 beds: One has a wait list of 129 women, the other, 209.

City Commissioner Dan Saltzman has long-championed women and children in need, with strong advocacy for the Gateway Center and the Children's Levy. Now with the city's housing and homeless programs under his watch, Saltzman has brought forth a proposal that takes advantage of the common bonds. Saltzman is implementing a \$1.7 million plan that focuses on getting women and families out of homelessness, bypassing the shelter system and reinforcing stable housing. Shelters have their place, but they are overflowing, bottlenecked by a lack of stable housing and funding for people working to get off the streets. It is a sound investment that pays dividends in the lives and families it restores, and the children who grow up in a safe and thriving environment.

Fortunately, the first tranche of the money, \$300,000, has been approved and directed to the Housing Bureau to get 92 women off the streets and into housing as soon as possible.

County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury has also pledged to step up financial support, and together, we trust the city and county can work more closely on the big-picture work ahead. For too long the city and county have parsed out populations and services, when a more concerted approach, with streamlined processes, would better serve our community.

The urgency for ramping up consolidated efforts is ever present. This past week, Portland police investigated a case of a 19-year-old woman who was sexually assaulted by a stranger while sleeping in her friend's car. It was after 3 a.m., on the inner Eastside. The suspect fled and remains at large. No women should be so vulnerable.

We have programs that work, and work well given the resources. We hope to see the city and county work together for everyone's future success.

## R2DToo could be good neighbor in the Pearl

For many, the Pearl District represents a neighborhood on the rise — a shining example of how to plan urban growth, public transportation, sustainability,

parks and the environment. The list goes on. Add a bustling food and art scene, a growing tech community, and a neighborhood that prides itself on walking and cycling, the light begins to shine even

understood. I don't care if your income is zero. You live in the Pearl, you must be rich. It doesn't matter. You're never going to win the argument. Everybody starts from nothing. We all started from nothing. We have great empathy.

"We've been really clear that we want long-term solutions for housing," Gardner says passionately. "The city is going to spend money to put this camp here. The money could go to build something else, something real that actually solves the problem. We want to solve the problem and to not just have Band-Aids. It rains in Oregon, so lets live in a tent — like, bad idea."

I don't even know where to start.

Let's start with politics. For the record, there are thousands of people violating land use rules and laws in our city every single night who are homeless. Essentially, nearly two thousand people in our city are "illegal" because they have no home or shelter. No law can or will change the fact that we have a massive shortage of affordable housing and that we have human beings who are enduring unimaginable living conditions because of their homelessness.

Gardner is spot on in thinking that we have to work towards long-term solutions for housing. The question then becomes who is responsible for taking care of those who will sleep outside tonight? The politics surrounding that question are many, but one thing is for certain, people do live and die on our streets. There's no getting around it.

The idea that somehow that landowners, developers and residents in the Pearl have somehow been wronged and are actually the victims of the lack of public process doesn't hold much water. Few neighborhoods in Portland have benefited so much from public input and support.

According to the Portland Development Commission, from 2000-13 there has been \$260.3 million in public investment that's gone to support the River District or the Pearl. With that kind of public support, it's ridiculous that the Pearl Neighborhood Association and other larger players are screaming foul. Please.

Let's talk about R2DToo for a moment.

Portland Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Pete Simpson told me recently, "Central Precinct officers report that R2DToo has not been a problem for police as it seems self-managed."

Self-managed. Isn't that at the heart of the American community? A group of individuals working to better their lives, regardless of their circumstances.

Like them or not, R2DToo is an example of a group of people experiencing homelessness that are pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. They may not be providing the living conditions that most Portlanders might consider healthy, or that Gardner or some politicians speak of, but believe me, the conditions at R2DToo are

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## DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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brighter.

Where else in Portland does the luxury of life blossom more than in the Pearl District? The Pearl District is a neighborhood where ideas and innovations can be developed, crafted and supported. The neighborhood is home to both the rich and the poor. Twenty-two percent of the neighborhood's rental units are dedicated to low-income housing. It supports nearly a dozen Street Roots vendors day in and day out and has a strong philanthropic spirit. It's home to Powell's Books. Need I say more?

That's why I was extremely disappointed when I heard that the people representing one of the most successful and affluent neighborhoods in Portland would be so quick to shoot down the idea of welcoming Right 2 Dream Too (R2DToo), a tent city created by people experiencing homelessness.

Within a week of the news breaking that the city and R2DToo had reached an agreement on a piece of property in the Pearl owned by the Portland Development Commission, the neighborhood association earmarked \$10,000 from its rainy-day fund to pay for legal services to fight the city and R2DToo's effort to move into the neighborhood.

An audio recording of the Pearl District's Neighborhood Association's meeting on Sept. 12 was given to Street Roots.

Patricia Gardner, the Pearl District's neighborhood chair, led spirited testimony on why the camp doesn't belong in the Pearl District.

After the passage of the resolutions to allocate money to fight the camp, Gardner went on to say, "What we want to do is focus in on the politics. That's the quickest and easiest way to get rid of this."

Gardner told the crowd, "My opinion is that their lawyer at the city is telling them to avoid process so they don't open up. That's our challenge moving forward."

"What we've been telling people to do is write to their commissioners," says Gardner. "Let's talk about the lack of public process, the lack of following their own laws. That's really the root of the issue here."

Gardner goes on to talk about the neighborhood being the victim in this process, "Because of the misunderstanding of this neighborhood, we will never be

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to [joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org).

## 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 guides, call 503-228-5657. Resources are also available online at [www.rosecityresource.org](http://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¢

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