

The Village Building Convergence: An answer to better questions

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When there are so many challenges to making the beautiful world we believe in the same one we live in, what do we do in Portland? When the world is increasingly ready for ways to heal deep social alienation and problems such as homelessness and disempowerment that go with it, what do we do in Portland? When you find yourself so deeply affected by that alienation that you don't even know where to start, what do you do in Portland?

There isn't one right answer because for there to be just one right answer would be a top-down approach that leaves out the more than two million people who call Portland home. That way of answering is so well-covered that it is being covered throughout the city right now by many well-intended planners and developers who aren't aware that the question involves alienation. But

there's another way of answering which (as it usually is with things that move long-standing and stuck questions in surprising ways that seem and feel like magic) involves another question: How do you include as many people as possible in

Village Building Convergence

May 23 to June 1

More information and registration at vbc.cityrepair.org

answering it together?

That kind of question is a guiding principle of the Village Building Convergence, 10 days of community placemaking and urban permaculture that happens in Portland every year. It's an event that brings people together to create neighborhood projects that support community and transform the spaces where they live — their own places — to reflect the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE VILLAGE BUILDING CONVERGENCE

Above, *The Lighthouse*, a cobb gathering place and project of a previous Village Building Convergence. Below, people dancing together at Share-It Square.

truth that we are all connected to each other and to the earth. Because one, you are inherently a visionary, and you don't even know it yet. And two, humanity and nature aren't separate. And three, the rest of the country is looking to Portland!

If you have ever biked across a beautifully painted mandala of an intersection or walked next to an organically shaped cobb bench inlaid with colorful glass on a parking strip and thought, "Wow, I live in Portland!" you already know a little of what VBC is about. Like a festival whose installations stay up year round, VBC leaves a permanent, sustainable impact all across the

city: places for people to sit and talk to their neighbors: places for people to gather and to play; places for things to grow. As an expression of what communities all across the city are ready to do in their own places, the VBC brings together a spectrum of related initiatives: community currency, grass roots democracy, ecological design, youth engagement, ecological stewardship, multi-modal transportation, and social justice in action.

This year, the fourteenth year of VBC, nearly 40 communities across the city will be working to build a fabulous array of community gathering places, from many

new street piazzas and street interventions — in places where it is unsafe for people to walk their neighborhoods — to ecological forms of building and construction. This is about retrofitting our neighborhoods so that they become stronger, more resilient places where people walk and build their talk. This is about bringing public art and community democracy into our everyday lives. This is about laying the village where we all know each other back over the grid where we don't. It is about lots of hands-on workshops to learn natural building, ecological design, and community-building.

And at the end of every day for 10 nights, this is about gathering at a central village venue and rocking with community-scale local and organic meals, workshops, speakers, music and dancing!

Ready to get involved? Excited to get involved? There are as many ways as there are communities in Portland. You can find out what projects are happening in your neighborhood that want neighbors like you to be a part of them. You can also donate materials that are still needed for the urban permaculture projects that are happening throughout the city. And you can volunteer for the event itself at the central venue, Sunnyside Methodist Church on 3520 SE Yamhill St. And you can donate and help spread the VBC Indiegogo campaign: www.indiegogo.com/projects/village-building-convergence

And, hey, if standing in a circle and holding hands with your neighbors in the middle of an intersection isn't your thing, try going to VBC this year. It will be.

VBC is May 23 through June 1. You can find more information and register for the event at vbc.cityrepair.org.

