

EDITORIAL

Peace sets stage for positive dialogue around the streets

Portland's streets are always busy in the summer, and seem to get busier every year. Each season brings more travelers to the area. More festivals, celebrations and events, large and small. More market stands and food carts carving out their corner of pavement. Summer means a little more of everything in Portland.

And there are more Street Roots vendors with every week as well. And more people simply "being" on the streets. It can get crowded out there some days, and tempers are always closer to flaring with the heat, especially among those with little to go around.

As long as our sidewalks and streets continue to become more crowded, with more visitors and more activity, the peace is always going to be fragile.

But to date, this summer has been comparably calm. No doubt it's a combination of factors, from the improvement in the economy in some circles, to outreach efforts for those left behind. There has also been a concerted effort

by police to get out of their cars and walk the downtown corridors to get to know who people are and engage everyone to keep the peace.

It's not all wine and roses, of course, but for the most part, the peace is holding its own. We know our vendors are a valuable part of that peace. We know that many businesses and police agree on the stabilizing force of a regular vendor on a busy street corner.

Still, every year, the specter of the summer boogieman — embodied by bands of travelers and street youths to our city — hijacks the discussion of what to do about homelessness and its related issues. It is a tail-chasing paper tiger that saps all energy from discussions around progress and solutions.

Sadly this year, the paper tiger has resurfaced in east Portland where police are conducting an end-run around civic policy by slapping charges of interfering with a police officer against homeless people for camping. Talk about regressive.

We have recovering local budgets, and a City Council that seems eager to move money around and secure new funding streams — still, homelessness has yet to draw those carrots. Perhaps because it's not the squeaky wheel this year.

As long as our sidewalks and streets continue to become more crowded, with more visitors and more activity, the peace is always going to be fragile. We have good systems and services that are filling only a fraction of the need when it comes to homelessness and affordable housing. This year we have the breathing room and the potential to plan for greater access and support for economically diverse housing options, for improved access to mental health and addiction services and for employment opportunities for all. Let's keep the momentum building for the positive.

Let's focus on solutions to tackle housing challenges

The Oregonian recently reported that apartment rentals in Portland shot up 6.1 percent last year according to Axiometrics, a rental industry data firm. The average rent for an apartment in Portland is \$1,160.

You know what? They're going to increase even more this year. The report shows that an estimated 4,000 rental units will be built in

Portland in the next two years alone.

It won't be long until the average rent in Portland is \$1,300, possibly even \$1,500 in the next decade. I don't know about you, but the majority of people I know aren't going to be able to keep up. That's not even accounting for low-income individuals and families that may not even bring that kind of money home to begin with.

You know what else? Portland doesn't have a plan to deal with the demand for affordable housing.

Street Roots and others have been harping at the city for more than a decade to develop more critical tools to deal with Portland's boom. Then the recession came and nothing was done. We did everything we could just to maintain the status quo.

It's time for Portland to get real. In the next two years Portland is going to be asked to increase our collective support for parks, transportation and schools. All great things, you say. I think so too. Unfortunately, affordable housing seems to be just an afterthought in how we plan the greatest city west of the Mississippi, an urban playground of sorts for the affluent and educated.

The question becomes, why should poor people buy into supporting these ongoing efforts if what we are doing in reality is pricing ourselves out of the community we

love? It's a question that needs to be answered.

Instead of piling on to our past woes, how about talking about some solutions? Here are a few:

- Support fees from short-term rental units to go toward affordable housing.
 - Embrace organizations like Right 2 Dream Too and have rest areas for people experiencing homelessness.
 - Build small homes for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.
 - Embrace a range of developments for affordable housing across a broad spectrum of developers.
 - Build higher. Yep. I said it. To the sky. And in doing so create a mechanism so that with each square foot built on the open market above a certain height, developers have to pay a fee and provide mixed-income housing.
 - A local document recording fee on documents and permits related to building market-rate housing.
 - A mandatory requirement for mixed-income housing along all new transportation projects over a certain price, such as the new MAX and Streetcar lines
 - I would say a housing levy, but I fear that by prioritizing all of the other great Portland things like libraries, parks, schools, and transportation. Housing doesn't stand a chance. That's too bad.
- These are just a few examples of how local officials could get to work. They shouldn't come as much of a surprise. These efforts or efforts like these are being done in many American cities. It's actually pretty common. Why we aren't doing this in Portland I haven't the faintest clue. Well, that's not exactly true, but I'm not here to tear anyone down. I'm simply writing to ask those in both the public and private sector to get to work to make Portland a city that works for all of us.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

Exist, Free, Dance

By Jonathan Bartley

I've seen in the stars
What it truly means
to be alive
Each shining star is a survivor
A star is not a constant in every sense,
Not in a person's sense of it.
What changes?
Our perspectives change them
And if we are vigilant,
Our selves do,
As our cells do
Constant only in our change.
So goes our journeys of self, of soul, of life.
I've seen in the pines what it truly means to grow.
Despite the wind, they do not fall,
but find in it freedom to sway to its rhythms.
Survive in change.

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 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 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.