

EDITORIAL

Tiny houses offer vital role in larger housing strategy

Portland is poised to begin the work of building tiny houses. We couldn't be more excited about the idea.

Tiny houses are small, compact houses, typically around 200 square feet.

Providing a safe home, regardless of its size, that offers privacy and security for individuals and families struggling through hard times is something we can all get behind. It's also a great opportunity for elders on a fixed income that would like to be able to access something other than a large, crowded apartment building.

Being able to implement such a plan doesn't come without challenges.

Their allure shouldn't replace the fact that we still need large investments in the regional Housing Investment Fund.

Will Portland neighborhoods embrace the idea, and can the city withstand the political pressure if neighborhoods do not? We hope so.

Time and again in

Portland and around the nation we've watched neighborhoods come undone over the idea of having homeless shelters, tent cities and other services in their neighborhoods. Having the city provide education and facilitating hard conversations will be key.

It's also important to realize that while tiny houses are cute and make a big splash in the media, ultimately they are just one component of a much larger strategy to tackle homelessness and poverty in our community. Their allure shouldn't replace the fact that we still need large investments in the regional Housing Investment Fund.

The rough costs for building a tiny home is \$12,000. And these houses can be constructed with mostly recycled materials. It's a win-win; especially considering what amenities can be added to areas with tiny houses, such as community gardens and green spaces.

This means more than building small houses. It means modifying zoning laws and other regulations to allow for a breakthrough in the housing market that accommodates people who have been pushed out. When it comes to solving our city's housing needs — everything should be on the table.

On issues of housing and equity, Portland is at a crossroads. On one hand, we have thousands of individuals and families sleeping outdoors experiencing the harsh realities of homelessness. One the other hand, poor people and communities of color are being displaced from the city at an alarming rate.

We have a responsibility to provide housing to Portlanders in a way that is safe and affordable. It's what a healthy society does. While tiny houses won't solve all of the issues related to housing, but they can play a small role in helping us work toward housing solutions.

Still missing after Ferguson: Police accountability

The tragedy of the Michael Brown killing is rocking the nation. It should.

For anyone living in an urban environment, especially people of color and the poor — the events of Michael Brown and the community response is not surprising.

It's hard to shift through all of the recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, but one thing is for sure: there's a commonality

throughout America right now — again, especially in urban environments. People are sick and tired of the lack of police accountability when it comes to the actions of a handful of officers who kill unarmed residents. The response by law enforcement and the militarization of the police adds fuel to the fire.

Here's the thing. The vast majority of police officers are amazing individuals who conduct heroic acts every day. I've personally witnessed with my own two eyes the police save people's lives and deescalate conflicts that were deadly serious. It's routine. There's no question that it's one of the toughest jobs that exist.

When things go wrong, it's easy to cast the police in bad light without the proper context.

The Portland Police Bureau and Chief Mike Reese recently released a video talking about the importance of trust in light of the events in Ferguson. He highlighted three important areas the police bureau is working on: diversity, use of force policies and transparency — all things that are vital to maintaining trust between the public and a healthy police force. The one vital thing

missing in the video is accountability. It would be easy for the public to give the police and city governments the benefit of the doubt if there was any. Unfortunately, there's not. There never has been.

Accountability would mean actually stopping racial profiling and working to hold officers accountable when they engage in wrongful activities related to their use of force and not representing the communities they serve. It would mean creating police oversight with teeth.

It's fantastic that both complaints against officers and use-of-force incidents have declined in Portland. It's great we're working to change the makeup of the police force to reflect the community and committed to equity goals. It's not enough.

The city can't offer one good reason why the officers involved in the James Chasse case are still police officers. Not one. There's no excuse. There's simply no amount of reform the police can accomplish that will replace real police accountability.

The events in Ferguson have magnified these discussions in Portland and across the nation. These are not isolated incidents.

Communities across the country want real police oversight. Portland is no different.

The sad reality is real police accountability has almost become a hollow term. It's probably not going to happen. It's no secret that police unions are one of the most powerful institutions that exist in American politics. How a police union can be more powerful than the government its members represent I have no idea. It's always baffled me.

In the meantime, we are left to work around the edges and to make both the public's relationship with the police and the police bureau itself the best it can be. It's not ideal, but it is the reality.



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DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Oh My Soul

by Victor Rivera

And you, O my soul, where do you stand?
What shadows do you cast upon the world?
Good, bad or indifferent

How important it is to me
To shade those in the heat
To warm those who are cold
To love those who are hated

How important it is to me
To cast my shadow in valleys deep
To urge goodness in all men

Even if taken for foolishness
O how important it is for me.

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.