

EDITORIAL

Governor's budget promising first step in affordable housing

One hundred million dollars: It's an impressive number. Indeed, Gov. John Kitzhaber's proposed budget is in some ways a milestone of public commitment to funding affordable housing for the state's impoverished families.

For the first time, the state is considering dedicating general obligation bonds toward the housing crisis. Compared to the \$7 million or even \$7.5 million dedicated in years past, this is real money that housing authorities with the state say will create 5,000 new affordable homes in Oregon.

As impressive as the commitment sounds, the need is even more so. In Multnomah County alone, authorities calculate that there are 23,000 fewer affordable homes than there are households that qualify for them. When families are paying 50, 60, up to 80 percent of their monthly household income on their rent and utilities, hard choices are left when it comes to other basic needs, not to mention the overall economy and the stability of the next generation.

And this is about children. Street Roots recently reported on the latest figures from the state Department of Education that nearly 20,000 Oregon students are homeless this school year. It is impossible to expect children to learn, thrive and succeed when they are living out of a car, sleeping on a friend's couch, constantly moving and struggling to survive.

That means more failure in school, more drop-outs and lower incomes. It means families choosing between meals and keeping a roof over their heads. It means displacement as workers have to move farther and farther from their jobsites in order to find an apartment they can afford.

So the governor's plan isn't so much a leap forward as it is one step in catching up. The problem of preserving affordable housing in a runaway housing market has been neglected for so long, we are now in a crisis of affordability and accessibility. The governor's pledge that this money will help keep the most vulnerable families from becoming homeless and help those who have get off the streets, gives us hope that the lowest income families are the priority, which is where the greatest need in housing lies. Because homelessness doesn't end in a shelter, it ends with a home.

In fact, there is much to be optimistic about in the governor's proposed budget, including priorities in education, local mental health services and increasing daycare resources for people getting off of welfare and reentering the workforce. It's all tied together, and it will take all levels of government, businesses and nonprofits working together to turn lofty goals into reality. This is one step. There's a long journey ahead.

Setting sail every week with your support

This is an incredible time at Street Roots. The dream we laid out five years ago to become a weekly publication is about to come true.

Last year at this time Street Roots went public with the idea and the hope that the community would support the transition from a biweekly to a weekly publication schedule. The gratitude and support that vendors and the organizations have felt

from the community has been overwhelming.

With your support, Street Roots will begin publishing weekly on Friday, Jan. 2.

What exactly does that mean? Going weekly means increasing our ability to give people on the fringes a voice through the newspaper and our website. It will mean holding government accountable on the poverty and social justice front. It will mean giving people of color, those less fortunate, and those with innovative ideas and dreams a platform to tell their stories and for the general public to understand how we are all connected.

At the heart of everything we do is supporting people experiencing poverty and homelessness in getting back on their feet. We play a role in facilitating people's access to housing and other services with an array of social-service providers and partners. This year, Street Roots will have given more

than 400 people an opportunity to prevent or work toward getting out of homelessness. Going weekly means increasing all of the vendors' income to help improve their quality of life.

"Going weekly will bring more customers, better dialogues, better relationships and more money," says Betty Jo, who sells at the Alberta Food Cooperative in Northeast Portland. "Going weekly means I will get to see my people more often. I love my customers. They are all so amazing! We share laughs and we share smiles. In the end, going weekly will mean good friendships, good relationships."

To ensure the success of weekly publication, this winter fund drive has to be our best ever. Our community continues to humble us with donations. We are on track, but we need your support now more than ever. Instead of crossing a finish line, in many ways we are just beginning to set sail. By going weekly the organization is pushing away from the docks and headed into the open sea. It's your support that will allow us to stay the course.

You can support the vendors and Street Roots by giving a gift today to Street Roots at www.streetroots.org, or by sending a check to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209. You can also give a gift this year through the Willamette Week Give!Guide (www.giveguide.org).

Your support means giving people a hand up, literally. Your donations go directly to support the vendors and the newspaper. Your support means the world. Thank you!



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.



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 a proud member 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.