



A group of women left homeless in 2014 after being released from women's winter shelter. "My experience has been hell," one of the women told Street Roots. "I don't have all the answers, but I do know that no one in their right mind would let hundreds of women sleep on the streets. Where's the leadership in this city?"

Let's work on making things right on housing

This year both the City of Portland and Multnomah County launched Home For Everyone, a new plan to address housing and homelessness in our community.

Mayor Charlie Hales and city housing commissioner, Dan Saltzman, along with Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury and commissioner Jules Bailey helped launch the process that brought together the community to oversee an array of complex services to deliver the best outcomes for ending individual and family homelessness in our region.

The group recommended an additional investment of about \$33 million over two years — some of which are

one-time allocations and some will be ongoing. The goal is to provide hundreds of people experiencing homelessness a safe and stable place to call home, while helping

prevent thousands more from becoming homeless.

The recommendations, as outlined in Street Roots in the March 26 edition, call for increasing women's and family shelter beds along with a menu of other options for elected leaders to consider — including increasing short and long-term rent assistance, Section 8 vouchers, creating more mobile outreach teams and \$20 million for affordable housing development. The recommendations also include allocating resources toward income opportunities to help stabilize people experiencing poverty.

Low-income Portlanders need access to stable housing in a variety of forms, and creating affordable housing requirements last month in South Waterfront and investing money in a East Portland affordable housing strategy with Home First Development and the Portland Habilitation Center (PHC) are steps in the right direction. In fact, Street Roots would argue that we need to be building more stable affordable housing in East Portland — considering how many school children and families already live in extreme poverty.

Saying that, there's a storm lurking on the horizon.

The Portland Housing Bureau's budget is projected to decline by million of dollars in the next five years. This comes on top of an already burdened system that's not producing even close to the affordable housing units needed to address the ongoing housing crisis. The newly formed Welcome Home Coalition, which Street Roots helped found, estimates that we will need an additional \$50 million annually to actually tackle the problem.

We have hard choices to make Portland, and Street Roots believes individuals and families should have access to a safe place to call home, especially women and children. It's that simple.

The City of Portland and Multnomah County should meet in the middle. That means investing an additional \$8 million a piece for the next two years to achieve the initial investments needed for the Home For Everyone plan. That's phase one.

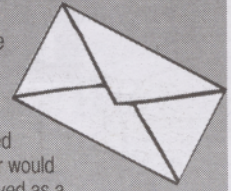
Phase two should be identifying a long-term local resource that will generate at least \$20 million annually and look at costs associated with a variety of housing models to build new affordable housing.

Street Roots understands the hard realities the city and county have to make when it comes to budget priorities. We also know that nothing should take priority over saving people's lives on the streets. Why bring the community together to create a plan if you don't plan on funding it?

We've been here before, and it isn't pretty. We have a moral obligation as a community to give people experiencing poverty safe and stable places to call home, especially knowing that education and health care systems, along with the business sector, will all benefit from these smart investments. If not, it's a vicious cycle that will continue to plague our city until we have the leadership to make things right. Street Roots believes there is no better time than the present to do so. Let's make things right.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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