

The Us Poem

By Carrico

We are here,
behind our sirens,
sharing your pain.
They malign us, too,
the media, the shocked, the politically
correct.
What beasts we seem to them.
"You disturb our rights,
why don't you all just go away?"
We can't.
We are the flip side of the bad boys coin,
The cops.

What is your vision for an Oregon with affordable-housing opportunities?

BY JANET BYRD
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Halfway home. The Oregon Legislature is just about halfway through the 2015 session, and advocates are just about halfway to securing historic victories in our effort to create housing opportunity. There have been some great strides forward, toward inclusionary zoning and securing rights for

people living outside.

Janet Byrd is the executive director of Neighborhood Partnerships and co-convenor of Oregon Housing Alliance

Our proposals to address immediate housing needs through rent assistance and shelters, to keep existing homes affordable, and to

support homeowners facing foreclosures are still moving and will be part of budget decisions.

As we stop to take a breath, congratulate one another and enjoy the amazing beauty that spring in Oregon brings, let's also take a moment to imagine what will be different when the Legislature goes home sometime between June 26 (when it is scheduled to be done) and July 11 (when the Constitution says it has to be done).

Oregon legislators will decide in the weeks ahead whether to create a new source of funding to build Oregon's future through new homes across Oregon. This historic direct investment in housing — Gov. Kate Brown has proposed \$100 million — will create up to 4,000 new places to live. As this investment helps communities across Oregon meet their housing needs, it will also create a new, ongoing source of money to meet future housing needs.

We need it all — tiny homes and large apartment buildings, intergenerational developments and housing for folks who need certain services.

In addition to creating homes, this is exciting for a lot of reasons. Historically, affordable homes have been built with federal dollars that come with a lot of strings attached. These strings put limits on the kind of homes we can build. The \$100 million is special because it offers a way to pay for these homes (with what are called general-obligation and lottery-backed bonds) that frees up builders and developers to be more innovative. This means new possibilities, and the potential to drive down the cost of development. Curious? All the details and updates are available on the Housing Alliance website.

What will building Oregon's future through this investment in housing opportunity mean? Take a minute to think about this. This new investment gives me hope that families have homes more secure than the rest areas I see on my way south on Interstate 5. It means that family shelters that are bursting at the seams trying to give kids a place to rest before school the next morning close because they aren't in demand. It means that homes with doors, walls and ceilings are available instead of doorways in downtown Portland. It means that parks across the state are used for recreation and leisure because they are no longer needed for food service and camping.

I hope it means that there's money to buy land in great neighborhoods to build homes on. That homes are available at prices workers can afford and that save precious hours and travel expenses.

I hope it means that creative local governments are helped as they work to

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set aside land for housing and to pull local resources together. That smart, capable housing developers come forward with their best ideas and get the resources they need to provide homes. We need it all — tiny homes and large apartment buildings, intergenerational developments, and housing for folks who need certain services.

What does building Oregon's future mean to you? What would change in your life, in your experience, with available and affordable homes? What are you excited to bring to the table to help create housing opportunity?

The Housing Alliance needs your thoughts. We will be collecting your answers, and we're asking all of you to join us in delivering those answers to legislators in Salem. There will be a hearing on the bonding proposal May 8 and another May 15. In between, on May 13, is Housing Opportunity Day.

Send us your hopes and ideas by email, on Facebook, on Twitter. Draw us a picture. Take a picture. Sing us a song. Tell us your vision: What does building Oregon's future look like to you?

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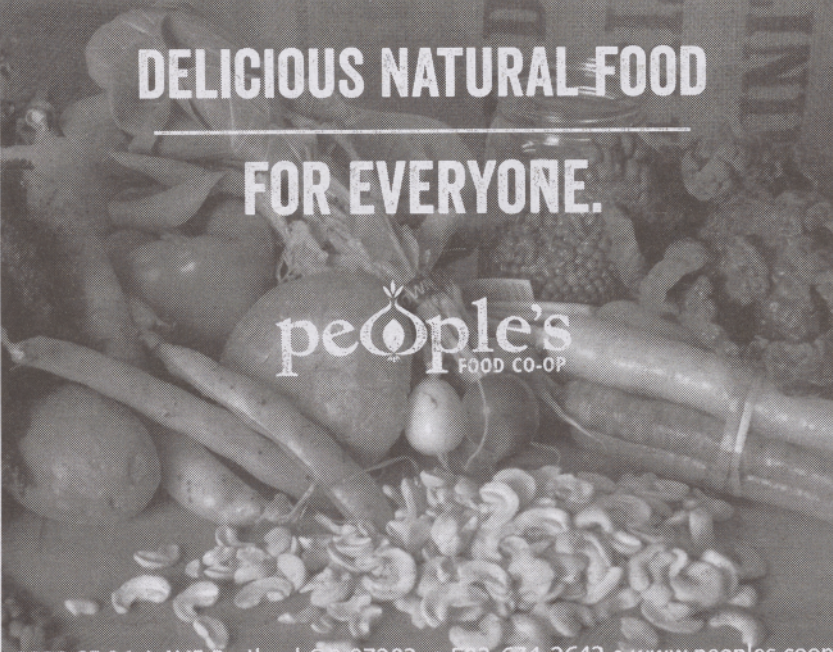
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