

Oregon State Capitol

## Lawmaker's housing agenda a place for real change

**T**his week, Oregon's House Democrats joined the chorus of elected officials calling for relief to the housing crisis facing the region.

We trust, as with the emergency declarations that have already occurred in Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles and Hawaii, their efforts will be met with community support and real change.

That will only come if the problem is addressed on multiple fronts. That includes protecting residents from outlandish profit schemes, preventing unnecessary

evictions and homelessness, and providing a sustainable rebound network for people already hurt by the shortage of low-income and working-class housing.

Portland and Multnomah County have already thrown their weight behind the issue, pledging \$30 million up front for new affordable housing, moving to raise the urban renewal dedication to low-income housing from 30 to 45 percent, and issuing tenant protections on some no-cause evictions.

And if the Democrats in the House want to pair real action with their agenda, then they will consider a comprehensive approach that will help cities like Portland do even more. The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of the state's vast network of housing, recovery, homeless and advocacy organizations, including Street Roots. A bill on the issue is still to be drafted, but testifying before the House Housing and Human Services Committee, the Housing Alliance outlines a clear course of action.

That course calls for fully funding the \$100 million the governor's office budgeted for local initiatives in affordable housing. The legislature slashed the proposal by more than half to \$40 million. It also calls for funding to preserve existing affordable housing and prevent additional foreclosures – an area in which Oregon still far outpaces the national average.

An effective agenda would also address housing recovery, committing additional assistance for short-term rental assistance and emergency shelter to local programs overwhelmed by the current need.

And it would mean having a serious discussion about how preventing excessive rent increases, ending profiteering evictions, and creating standardized zoning incentives for affordable housing can correct the

runaway market. The statewide, special interest preemptions on inclusionary zoning and rent control – among other municipal options – restrict local government from being responsive to their residents.

Oregon is a state of great economic and social diversity. The driving forces behind the housing crisis in urban areas such as Portland, Bend and Eugene are different than those affecting rural markets. As such, our legislature should be allowed to respond to those vastly different dynamics – not by pandering to special interests, but by allowing communities to respond to the crisis as it applies to their own residents. That includes scrapping outdated, statewide preemptions that may be good for growth in towns like Baker City, but have fostered gross inequalities in metropolitan areas.

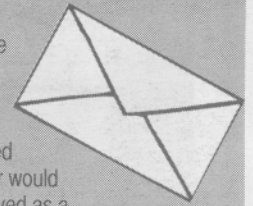
We didn't get into this housing emergency overnight. It was years in the making, with tacit encouragement from lawmakers and speculators, and the benefit of that old real estate mantra: location, location, location. It's been building steadily since 2010, and today has reached a point that no responsible representative of the people can shrug his or her shoulders and nod to a free market and tied hands.

If you are in the crisis, you are familiar with the desperation experienced when even gainful employment can't keep up with the rent hikes and the market forces pushing people out of their homes. On average, according to Axiometrics, rent in Portland has increased more than 40 percent since 2010, causing a ripple effect through the community. No-cause evictions are clearing out entire buildings, once considered affordable, at an unprecedented rate in order to refill them with more lucrative tenants. Micro apartments are becoming a fallback for some, not that they're affordably priced, but with a rental vacancy rate around 3 percent, people take what they can get. The prospects are far more grim for families who are being displaced from their homes and schools, and removed from their network of friends and family they rely on. And with supply so far behind demand, out-of-state investors are making a run on Portland's housing market, mainly on rental units.

Oregon lawmakers have only a short session this coming February, and it's not typically a time where groundbreaking measures find their legs. But this year has to be different, and it can be. We have waited too long as it is.

### 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.



### Street Roots

211 NW Davis St.  
Portland, OR 97209  
503-228-5657  
Fax: 503-227-3117  
www.streetroots.org  
www.news.streetroots.org  
Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat. and 7:30-11 a.m. Sun.

### Advertising

Interested in advertising in Street Roots?  
Contact Israel Bayer at israel@streetroots.org

### Staff

**Executive Director** Israel Bayer  
israel@streetroots.org  
**Managing Editor** Joanne Zuhl  
joanne@streetroots.org  
**Vendor Coordinator** Cole Merkel  
cole@streetroots.org  
**Operations Director** Sarah Beecroft  
**Development Director** Sarah Cloud  
**Program Assistant** Scott Jackson, Jesuit Volunteer  
**Development Assistant** Ann-Derrick Gaillot  
**Reporters** Emily Green, Sue Zalokar, Ann-Derrick Gaillot, Sarah Hansell, Lenora Ko, Sam Bouman, Jared Paben  
**Photographers** Diego Diaz, Joe Glode  
**Canvasser** Desmond Hardison

### Board of Directors

**Chairman** Bruce Anderson  
**Vice-Chairman** Brad Taylor  
**Treasurer** Heather Stadick  
**Secretary** Amber Bielman  
**Directors** Rich Rodgers, Michael Anderson, Leo Rhodes, Nora Coon, Darren Alexander, Eddie Barbosa, Rachel Langford, Marcus Swift

### Volunteers

Jan Bayer, John Barker, Stacey Heath, Brian Ritchie, Anders Frederickson, Stephanie Holum, Anjali Rathore, Sam Bouman, Joanna Chase, Zoe Klingmann, Haven Herrin, Eliese Baker, Dan Jones, Rob Shyrock, Tom Ray, Doug Spangle, Susannah Kamala, Jessica Pollard, Lee Ko, Diana Richardson, Cherie Manning, Thomas Buell Jr.

If you are interested in volunteering with Street Roots, please submit a volunteer application at streetroots.org/volunteer. Or call our volunteer coordinator for more information at 503-228-5657.

## EDITORIAL