

# Joyce Hotel saved from joining housing casualties

The Joyce Hotel is not in any tourist pamphlet. It's not a go-to recommendation for people looking for a fun weekend in old Portland. It has never been and never will be anyone's second choice if the Hilton is booked.

But when the news broke on Wednesday that the city was buying, and thereby preserving this so-called flophouse in the West End, many people breathed a huge sigh of relief.

## EDITORIAL

Because contrary to the "hotel" in its name, this was a home, and one of the only homes for people with little

money and fewer options.

In a city with a rental vacancy rate between fat chance and a black hole, the Joyce offered that rarity of rarities: a place to lay your head for the night, or a week or more, outside of a shelter or the streets, no matter who you were, no questions asked. It was the last of its kind, a place where safety could be had on a weekly basis for as little as \$19 a night. And in a city changing as fast as ours, it was becoming more rare by the day.

In December, Joyce residents were put on notice that they had 90 days to vacate the property. The Joyce management would be no more. The building was being vacated. The owner was looking for a buyer. We've heard this before, haven't we? The building is different, but the story is sadly familiar.

And indeed, the story could have continued much the same way others have gone before. The residents - nearly 100 of our community's most vulnerable - would be removed. Their belongings hauled away if they couldn't take them when they left or had no place to put them. The building would be renovated and the rents hoisted to the very limit of what the market could bear. And within two years no one would even remember who's father lived there after he lost his apartment, or how understanding the woman at the front desk was when someone's rent was short one week. The former residents would become the top agenda item at your next neighborhood association meeting.

But this time the city rewrote the story. It is buying the property for \$4.22 million, with the intent to fold it into its inventory of low-income housing.

The city had originally pitched an offer

months ago, before the 90-day, March 30 cutoff on evictions, with the condition that the tenants of the building remained.

The owner squashed the deal and continued to look for other offers. From that point onward, the city worked to help get residents of the Joyce into new housing and connecting them with services.

The city was persistent. It didn't let the free-for-all Portland market forces rule the day. It stood behind long-term city planning goals and the current housing emergency to preserve the Joyce. In 2001, the city committed itself to a no-net-loss policy to preserve the remaining 8,286 affordable rental units in the city center. It has already lost 1,500 of them since.

Even with the deal reached this week, the city will still have to invest millions more to bring it up to code, install an elevator and address other long-neglected repairs. There are only 20 residents remaining, and Central City Concern, the city's primary low-income housing service, will operate the hotel in the short-term, while connecting the residents with services and alternative housing during renovations.

After renovations, the plan by the Portland Housing Bureau is to use the Joyce as a temporary relocation building while upgrades are made to other low-income buildings in the city's portfolio.

Kurt Creager, Director of the Portland Housing Bureau, said "The loss of such units during a housing and homelessness emergency would create a real humanitarian crisis."

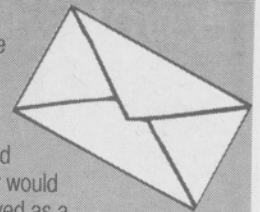
Creager, Housing Commissioner Dan Saltzman, the workers with Central City Concern and everyone else involved in this development - those working on the purchase process and also one-on-one with residents - deserve credit for rewriting the story.

To understand the value of the Joyce is to understand the complex soup of economic, social, health and psychological issues that is poverty and desperation. Falling through the cracks is incredibly easy, and sometimes frighteningly swift. Climbing your way back takes time, support and resources. That's where the Joyce fits in. And while you may never cross its threshold yourself, it will be a welcome haven for thousands of Portlanders, for many, many years to come.



## 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 Program Director** 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, Suzanne Zalokar, Ann-Derrick Gaillot, Sarah Hansell, Leonora Ko, Jared Paben, Amanda Waldroupe  
**Photographers** Diego Diaz, Joe Glode, Ben Brink  
**Editorial Assistant** Monica Kwasnik  
**Canvasser** Desmond Hardison

## Board of Directors

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

## Volunteers

Jan Bayer, John Barker, Stacey Heath, Stephanie Holum, Anjali Rathore, Zoe Klingmann, Haven Herrin, Dan Jones, Rob Shyrock, Dennis Hogan, Tom Wright, Eileen Deerdock, Vince Waldman, Judy Taylor, Karen Allen, Monica McKune, Susan Wolfe, Lucas Hawthorne, Thomas Buell Jr., Jeanie Lunsford, Yasmin Amirsoleymani, Jason Cohen, Tom Ray, Doug Spangle, Susannah Kamala, Jon Raymond, Hilary Smith, Diana Richardson, Cherie Manning  
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.