

# Let's give everyone a safe place to call home

**W**ith the endorsement of the City Council, Portland will see a \$258 affordable housing bond on the ballot in November. It's a historic moment. The campaign is called Yes for Affordable Homes!

The council also voted to support a 1 percent construction excise tax on all new residential and commercial development, giving Portland millions of revenue annually to support affordable housing. It's about time.

## DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer



Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at [israel@streetroots.org](mailto:israel@streetroots.org) or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

These policy decisions come the same year that the city voted to tax short-term rentals and create tenants protections (We need more!). And inclusionary zoning policies are expected to pass in the fall.

At the same time, the city and county have dedicated millions of dollars annually to support homeless services in our community.

It's going to take a comprehensive strategy to curb homelessness in our community and to provide all Portlanders with a chance at fair housing. And that's exactly what's beginning to unfold.

People ask me, "Why should Portlanders vote for an affordable housing bond?"

Here's the thing. Possibly you're a bleeding-heart liberal and voting for an affordable housing bond simply fits in line with your values. Maybe you're a fiscal conservative and you want government to save money over time by investing wisely in housing. Maybe you're simply mad about tent camping. At the end of the day, regardless of political ideologies, or why you want people experiencing homelessness off the streets – we can all agree that we need to invest in more affordable housing stock.

Will the affordable housing bond solve all of our problems? No. But it will provide housing for thousands of people. Families. Elders. Veterans. It's also a part of a larger strategy as outlined above.

It's also going to take a banner year in Salem next year where we are looking for the governor and state legislators to deliver big on housing.

Does that mean our work is done, hardly, it's just beginning.

The harsh reality is that people are still dying homeless on our streets. More than 50 individuals die on our streets every year. That's simply unacceptable.

Moreover, the lack of affordable housing and homelessness isn't simply a Portland problem.

Thousands of people in central Oregon are under water. Communities up and down the coast can't provide enough adequate housing for their own workforce. Beaverton, Gresham, Ashland, Eugene, Bend – the list goes on and on. The housing crisis is real. It's not a fictitious slogan made up by some newspaper editor or politician.

Just this week I talked to the mother of James who died homeless in 2015 in Portland's Union Station. "Keep fighting," she said. "There's not a day that goes by I don't think of my son and the work we still have to do."

Yes, we do.

"I'm feeling a lot better than I was on the streets," says Wayne Moore, a Street Roots vendor.

It's that simple. Housing makes all the difference in the world when it comes to having the opportunity of living a healthy life.

Affordable housing is an investment in our community, much like fire and police, our highways and bike infrastructure. We have to think of it as such.

So, cheers to all of you for being a part of a collective effort to stand up for the city we love, to not become San Francisco. To give people a safe place to call home. Now let's go win our city a housing bond and bring in a new day in our community.

Let's give people an opportunity for a better tomorrow. Let's give thousands of Portlanders a safe place to call home. Let's stand up and fight for our city. It's the least we can do.

Wayne Moore

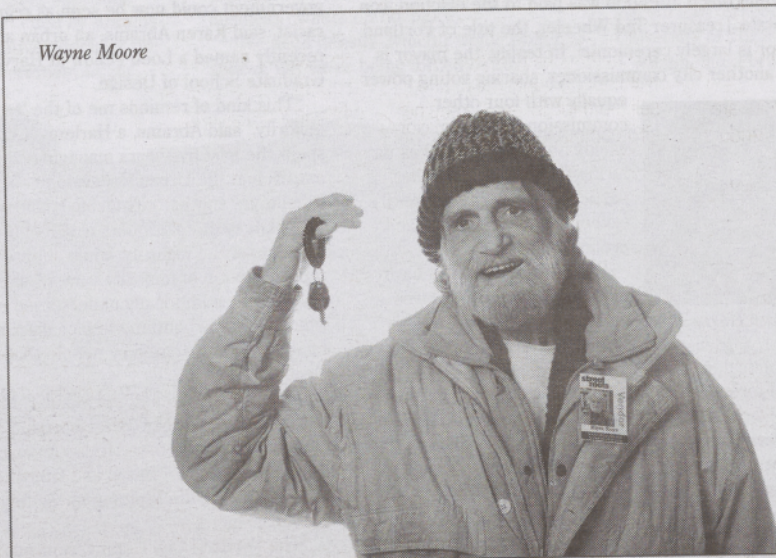
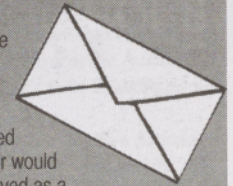


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If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, [joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org). 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](http://www.streetroots.org)  
[www.news.streetroots.org](http://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.

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## Staff

**Executive Director** Israel Bayer  
[israel@streetroots.org](mailto:israel@streetroots.org)  
**Managing Editor** Joanne Zuhl  
[joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org)  
**Vendor Program Director** Cole Merkel  
[cole@streetroots.org](mailto:cole@streetroots.org)  
**Operations Director** Sarah Beecroft  
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