

Affordable housing an asset to the whole community

Sydney Linden is the development manager with JOIN, which works to get people into permanent housing.

BY SYDNEY LINDEN
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

This November, I will be voting yes on measure 26-179 – a historic affordable housing bond that will provide thousands of Portland families and seniors with homes they can afford and the opportunity to live better lives. In my professional life, I have witnessed the overwhelming need for access to more affordable housing options in our community through my work at a local nonprofit organization

called JOIN. It's my own family's story, however, that is at the heart of why voting yes for this measure is deeply personal and fills me with hope.

My mom, Kathleen, was born and raised in Colorado and worked outside the home from the

time she graduated from high school until she retired at 62. She put herself through college while raising kids and working full time, built a career, and made meaningful contributions to society. Like a lot of women, she was also the primary caregiver for several members of her family. In fact, my mother's life is a series of loving stories about the people she cared for and nurtured without much help or reward.

My mom raised my sister and me by herself. She took care of my grandmother when she went blind and could no longer live alone. She moved across the country when my sister needed help getting her master's degree, happily taking time off work to become a "grandma

nanny" to her beloved grandson. And when my aunt became ill with a chronic and ultimately fatal disease, my mom moved in and took care of her until my aunt died at home surrounded by the mountains she loved.

After my aunt's death, my mom decided to move to Portland to be closer to me. Despite having worked all her adult life, her social security doesn't amount to much – definitely not enough to rent an

apartment in Portland. Together we filled out hundreds of pages of paperwork and signed her up on every waiting list for subsidized senior housing in town. A few months later, her name came up and she had the option of two apartments: one in Northeast Portland with a great bathtub and one in Southeast Portland with a balcony. She chose the balcony and in May of 2012, moved into her little studio apartment with big windows and a great view of the west hills.

We were lucky. Four years ago there was far more availability and the waiting lists for subsidized senior housing weren't as long. Today, the mothers, fathers and grandparents like my mom who apply for this type of housing might have to wait years before there is an available apartment. For families with children, wait lists can be even longer, and the hope of ever having truly stable housing can seem more like a fantasy.

At JOIN, we see hundreds of people every year who are homeless for no other reason than the lack of affordable housing. People who are on a fixed income or working multiple jobs and taking care of families simply cannot afford rent and life's other expenses in Portland. Too many of our neighbors live on the edge, paying higher and higher rents every month until they topple over that edge into homelessness. The situation is tragic and the need is staggering, which is why I'm so excited about Measure 26-179. It's a big step in the right direction of making sure that our community is a place that everyone can afford.

My mother took care of people for 45 years. And now Portland takes care of her by guaranteeing she won't ever pay more than 30 percent of her income toward rent. With her affordable apartment, my mom's Social Security is enough to have a good quality of life in Portland. She can pay her rent and bills, buy decent quality groceries, hit a garage sale or two, and take her daughter out for a burger. She can focus on her health, her volunteer work, her friendships and her family. It also gives my sister and me the stability and peace we need to meet the challenges of our own lives, instead of having to worry if our mother can make the rent next month. Affordable housing transforms the health, well-being and happiness of entire families – trust me, I know. Please, vote Yes for Affordable Homes – Measure 26-179 – by November 8.

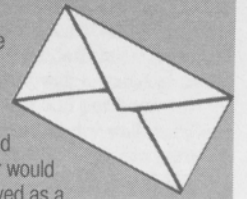
GUEST COMMENTARY



Kathleen Linden

Write in

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Street Roots' endorsement affirmations

Statewide measures

Measure 96: Yes

Amends Constitution: Dedicates 1.5 percent of state lottery net proceeds to support services for Oregon veterans

Measure 97: Yes

Increases corporate minimum tax when sales exceed \$25 million; funds education, health care, senior services

Measure 98: Yes

Requires state funding for dropout prevention, career and college readiness programs in Oregon high schools

Measure 99: Yes

Creates Outdoor School Education Fund, continuously funded through lottery, to provide outdoor school programs statewide

Measure 100: Yes

Prohibits purchase or sale of parts or products from certain wildlife species; exceptions; civil penalties

Multnomah County measures

Measure 26-181: Yes Amends charter; extends term limits to three consecutive terms

Measure 26-182: Yes

Amends charter; commissioners may run for chair midterm without resigning

Measure 26-183: Yes

Amends charter; changes elected sheriff position to appointed department head

Measure 26-184: Yes

Limits contributions, expenditures; requires disclosure in county candidate elections

Measure 26-185: Yes

Amends charter review committee appointment process, sets appointment, convening timelines

City of Portland measures

Measure 26-179: Yes

Bonds to fund affordable housing

Measure 26-180: Yes

Establish tax on recreational

