

Celebrate housing for life: Yes for Affordable Homes

Michael Votta and his partner Andie were everything to one another. Both mentally ill, they were lovers, best friends and survivors of a lifetime of abuse. They looked out for one another on the streets. It was a beautiful love affair to witness in a world gone wrong.

Tragically, Michael died homeless and alone

on the streets, without his dear Andie. On most days, I see Andie in Old Town wandering the streets, also homeless and alone.

Sometimes she's there mentally, but often times she is not.

She always seems to find the space to say hello to me, regardless of if she's having a bad day or not. I do my best to give her time & offer her a smile and hello in return. She both haunts me & inspires me. In her eyes, I see the ghosts of not only Michael and herself, but the dozens of people I've had relationships with that have died on the streets. She inspires me because she's still going and has refused to give up. I fear that Andie, like many others will die an untimely death on the streets with no one by their side.

Now I have worked on the streets for 15 long years, which seems like a lifetime. The trauma I carry along with the fight has consumed me at times. But in the end, like Andie I will never give up hope – hope that we as a community can give people a safe place to call home.

Think about this.

Every night an estimated 4,400 Portlanders sleep outside or in our shelters. Increasingly these are families, people of color, people with disabilities and seniors.

Today in Portland, accessing a shelter can take two to eight months, while waiting for permanent affordable housing requires one to three years.

Last year, average monthly rents increased by \$128 citywide. Portland is one of the most expensive rental markets in the nation. The



average rent in this city is nearly \$1,800.

There are 61 percent more Oregon seniors living in poverty today than just a decade ago. Between 2013 and 2015, there was a 23 percent increase in the number of people aged 55 and older that were homeless.

According to the last "point-in-time" count, 374 children in Multnomah County were unsheltered, sleeping in emergency shelters, or in transitional housing. Nearly all were in families, and a growing percentage were in families sleeping outside or in their car.

And 57 percent of people experiencing homelessness have a disability.

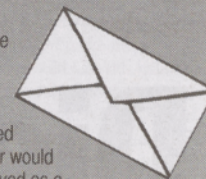
More than 50 individuals die on our streets every year.

The reality is there are a lot of reasons why you should vote Yes for Affordable Homes on your ballot this election cycle. None more so than Andie, who deserves to come inside from the wilderness. Let's bring 3,000 Portlanders home! Vote yes for affordable homes on your ballot.

Israel Bayer and Michael Votta outside the Street Roots office earlier this year.

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.



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



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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

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

