

# We must plan a future for all, not just some

**H**olding out a lime-green lava lamp and a brown belt, a man asked whether Street Roots vendors might be able to use these items he found discarded on the sidewalk. He couldn't use the lava lamp, he explained, because he was homeless himself, so he didn't have access to an outlet. And the belt, well, the belt was in good shape, surely

someone could hitch their pants with it?

I set the belt on a free table in the vendor office—hesitating with the lava lamp, I'll admit, fearing that rain may have shorted its wires—and marveled at the

generosity that this man showed. He found some items of value, and he wanted to share them.

Generosity walks by our door day after day. I see folks living on the streets who gather needles from the sidewalk, lest anyone injure themselves. After an upset, confused passerby kicked our garbage can over, another man, possibly homeless himself, quietly picked up the bits of dislodged garbage, combing the sidewalk for even the small bits of debris, almost like one might comb the beach for shells.

Yes, garbage piles up near some encampments because there is no infrastructure to rid that garbage, but there are also many caretakers of our city who live on its streets.

A Street Roots volunteer recently said to me that she returns to Street Roots each week because she is moved by these many acts of kindness between people who have very little. I agree. It's enough to break your heart and sew it back together all at once. It can be really, really big, this human spirit. Some people suffer so much and still care for each other.

And likewise, I hear from readers who look out for Street Roots vendors. All of you Street Roots supporters who insist that the fates of our lives are necessarily intertwined, you give me hope.

I will return to this notion again and again in this column: we must make life better for folks suffering homelessness, and we must not make life more difficult. That second part seems like a low bar, but it's one we often do not meet.

Between 2003 and 2009, courts twice struck down city ordinances that banned people from sitting or lying on the sidewalk—laws that primarily targeted homeless folks. What we have now results from a 2010 sidewalk management plan, a much smaller assortment of downtown blocks marked as Pedestrian Use Zones.

It was clear last November that this is not a static zone after the mayor's office extended it to the front of Columbia Sportswear.

Ever since, I am watching, ready to write should the city extend these blocks further.

This is on my mind as I follow the proposals for developing what Prosper Portland calls the Broadway Corridor, a fan-shaped area that

connects Old Town and the Pearl District. It encompasses Union Station, which in the early 20th century anchored a vibrant African American neighborhood. The Golden West Hotel, for example, was launched by an African American entrepreneur named W.D. Allen; a window display along Northwest Everett and Broadway now recounts this history.

Prosper Portland has winnowed the proposals down to three and will soon make a decision. What will this development bring to these northwest Portland streets?

Will a festive, quality plan include the poor? We must insist on plenty of housing that's affordable to people experiencing poverty.

And also, with this and every development around our city, we must insist on maintaining that low bar, too, that life not grow more difficult for those for whom it is already so difficult.

In other words, if neighborhoods are developed with shiny, glossy futures, the people whose struggles are not shiny and glossy must be welcome, too.

This so often does not happen.

I think of the extra pressure on Old Town now, for example, after the handmade, self-governed space of Right 2 Dream Too—with its brightly painted doors lining Northwest Fourth Avenue and Burnside—was relocated to land across the river 10 months ago. More than a 100 people each night lost that safe, protected sleep in Old Town to development plans for the area. I am glad to hear reports of how the Lloyd District has embraced Right 2

Dream Too in its new location. Still, I miss its vibrant contribution to Old Town as a haven where the poorest among us are valued.

I recently talked with a group of high school students who expressed dismay over how human lives are devalued because the trappings of poverty are deemed an eyesore, as does happen, if we are honest about it, again and again. As they spoke I was reminded that the leadership of our teenagers is profound and hopeful, clearly evidenced in the inspiring movement around a March for Our Lives.

If society regards homelessness as an eyesore that's bad for business, then the homeless are vulnerable when neighborhoods polish their storefronts. This should not be so.

We must fight again and again so that the poorest among us have a space in the civic life and public sphere of our city.

We must guard against any expansion of sidewalk laws that target our friends who scavenge lava lamps and belts, who suffer wet sleeping bags and hailstorms, who try to muffle out the shouts of nightclub revelers while they sleep in door stoops, who simply have the least resources in a land of plenty.

When our city plans for beautiful spaces, that beauty must be available to the poorest of our citizens; it certainly should not be cause for their exclusion. Whatever we do, let the poorest of our neighbors be included. That's the kind of city I want to live in.



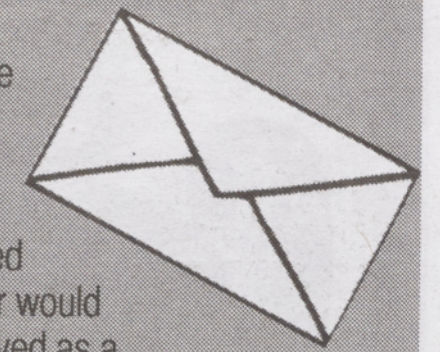
## DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Kaia Sand

Kaia Sand is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach her at [kaia@streetroots.org](mailto:kaia@streetroots.org). Follow her on Twitter @mkaiasand

## 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 Executive 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 7:30-1 p.m. Sun.

## Advertising

Interested in advertising in Street Roots? Email Andrew Hogan at [andrew@streetroots.org](mailto:andrew@streetroots.org)

## Staff

**Executive Director** Kaia Sand  
[kaia@streetroots.org](mailto:kaia@streetroots.org)  
**Executive Editor** Joanne Zuhl  
[joanne@streetroots.org](mailto:joanne@streetroots.org)  
**Vendor Program Director** Cole Merkel  
[cole@streetroots.org](mailto:cole@streetroots.org)  
**Development Director** Andrew Hogan  
[andrew@streetroots.org](mailto:andrew@streetroots.org)  
**Senior Staff Reporter** Emily Green  
**Operations Director** Sarah Beecroft  
**Program Assistant** Caelin Miltko, Jesuit Volunteer  
**Vendor Assistant** Scott Jackson, Alex Gillow-Wiles  
**Development Assistant** Rosemary Wilson  
**Editorial Producer** Monica Kwasnik  
**Reporters** Sarah Hansell, Leonora Ko, Emilly Prado, Jared Paben, Amanda Waldroupe, Thacher Schmid, DeVon Pouncey, Helen Hill  
**Photographers** Diego Diaz, Arkady Brown, Celeste Noche  
**Canvasser** Desmond Hardison

## Board of Directors

**Chair** Brad Taylor  
**Vice-Chair** Rachel Langford  
**Treasurer** Heather Stadick  
**Secretary** Dan Jones  
**Directors** Michael Anderson, Sandra Hahn, John Brown, Nels Johnson and Alison Hallett

## Volunteers

Jan Bayer, John Barker, Stacey Heath, Anjali Rathore, Dennis Hogan, Lucas Hawthorne, Thomas Buell Jr., Jason Cohen, Doug Spangle, Susannah Kamala, Jon Raymond, Diana Richardson, Paul and Madeline Gefroh, Mary Anne Joyce, Brooke Anderson, Gillian Floren, Mark Oldani, Bianca Butler, Camber Hansen-Karr, Miranda Woods, Henry Brannan, Helen Hill, Mary Emerson, Brooke Anderson, Kathleen McFall, Robb Hengerer, Maile Yeats-Rowe, Erin Parsons, Faye Powell, Jon Raymond, Danny Moran and Megan Pickrel-Winer. If you're interested in volunteering with Street Roots, please submit a volunteer application at [streetroots.org/volunteer](http://streetroots.org/volunteer). Or you can call for more information at 503-228-5657.