

Ground up and top down, let's make good ideas succeed

Today only pigeons and geese wander among the low puddles of the gravel lot beneath the Broadway Bridge, but if organizers of Harbor of Hope realize their plans, this land will hold a structure for some homeless folks to sleep, connect to medical services, and, importantly, access shower and laundry services.

After Harbor of Hope organizers, alongside the mayor, announced their plans in a press conference last week, I walked

along the Naito Parkway sidewalk along the eastern edge of that city-owned lot, imagining the possibilities proposed by this nonprofit founded by developer Homer Williams.

A man trudged by, his backpack hanging long and heavy. To the west, an Amtrak train was boarding. And a bit further north and plainly in view—the yellow-sided Residence Inn developed by Homer Williams's firm, Williams & Dame.

Scuttle back five years, and Williams was fighting the city from locating the Right 2 Dream Too under the west ramp of the Broadway Bridge because it was too close to that Residence Inn. Right 2 Dream Too is the self-governed rest area designed by folks experiencing homelessness to protect sleep for people living on the streets. During the six years it was sited in Old Town at Fourth

shelter.

One of the top concerns that emerged from those surveys? A desperate need for laundry facilities.

The deeper into the issue Williams got, he explained to me, the more he realized the need to support people experiencing homelessness far and wide, all around our city, and one "obvious site for this was not far from the site I fought before," he said to me, deciding he had to "walk the walk."

This is a powerful arc—the transformation of a NIMBY (not in my backyard) attitude to YIMBY (yes in my backyard). It gives me hope that many more such transformations are possible. Williams advocates for big responses to homelessness.

"Every citizen, every business, every foundation has to get involved," he said. "Otherwise we will get overwhelmed."

That history is not the only conflict that informs this proposed navigation center. The first \$1.5 million investment came from Tim Boyle, CEO of Columbia Sportswear, who last November wrote a column for the Oregonian declaring public safety concerns for his store that included human waste and garbage on the sidewalk. He called for more police. What resulted was the mayor's expansion of bans against sitting on the public sidewalk in front of the store.

Here's one thing that's clear: when people complain about what amounts to infrastructural problems (trash, human waste), the cruel response is to criminalize the people who are in desperate conditions.

This new response from Boyle nods in the right direction. It's constructive, providing folks with services that make life easier.

I urge Harbor of Hope organizers to draw from the good work that has been done on the need for hygiene services for homeless folks. Among those efforts is the extensive research conducted by students and faculty of the Portland State University School of Social Works in partnership with Sisters Of The Road. Without a shower or clean clothes, people on the streets face additional health struggles as well as stigmas.

And I'm hopeful that a navigation center could hold a space for poor people in a region that will see more development. Prosper Portland will select a bid for the Broadway Corridor Project in the coming weeks. Business leaders among Harbor of Hope can use their clout to demand that poor Portlanders deserve support during the transformation of this neighborhood, and all our neighborhoods.

But key also is that the organizers of Harbor of Hope listen to leadership and input from people experiencing homelessness. Mubarak — who is not currently working with Harbor of Hope — described to me how the innovations led by homeless people often make spaces for other innovations to happen.

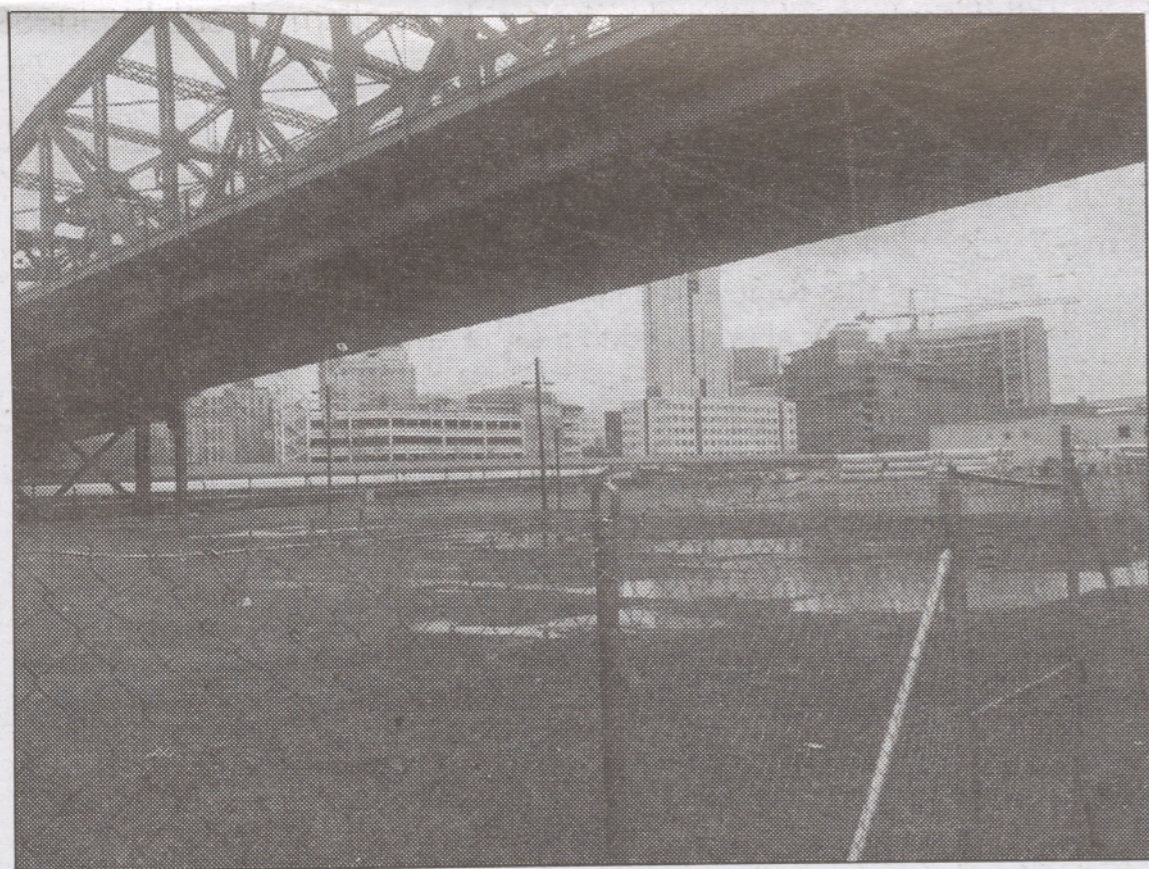
The very possibility for the more top-down response of Harbor of Hope was opened up by the ground-up work of Right 2 Dream Too, and this is all part of our large, complex story as a city. Let's help good ideas succeed. There's so much that must be done.

DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Kaia Sand



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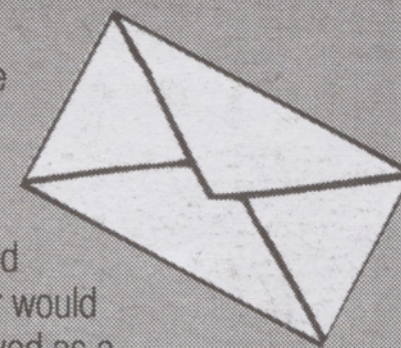
Above, the site in the west end of the Broadway Bridge where the nonprofit Harbor of Hope is proposing building a shelter and navigation center for people experiencing homelessness.

Avenue and Burnside, often 100 people a night found safe sleep in its tents. The location under the Broadway Bridge was one of many locations the city, prodded by Commissioner Amanda Fritz, tried to secure for Right 2 Dream Too, after the city initially challenged its existence on a privately owned lot. Right 2 Dream Too eventually moved to its current home on city land near the Moda Center, an impermanent arrangement.

Since those contentious beginnings, Williams has come to champion big responses to homelessness, and part of this growth was rooted in what he learned from Right 2 Dream Too. He collaborated with Right 2 Dream Too co-founder, Ibrahim Mubarak, who worked with him on past Harbor of Hope plans, administering a survey to assess needs for a

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