

# Vendor voices: What would you do to improve police relations?

BY HELEN HILL  
STAFF WRITER

As part of Street Roots continuing effort to shed light on the relationship between the Portland Police and those who live on the streets, we recently asked our vendors to tell us their thoughts on how they would improve relations with the police force.

Our vendors on the whole were sympathetic to the difficulties of police work, but also desirous of a more compassionate attitude towards the difficulties of extreme poverty. So we asked: What would you do to improve relations between the police and people living on the street?

"The majority of police are educated and caring human beings who struggle through bureaucracy and rules to benefit community. There are some there who are there to do violence and discredit the housed and un-housed and those with mental health issues. I get treated well, but I'm white and I can communicate. Only a few I've met have an attitude of intimidation. We have to weaken the police union so they are allowed to fire them. ... There's lots of PTSD. It's the rare individual who can deal with what they do, and there is massive overtime."

- Dan Newth  
New Seasons at Northeast 33rd Avenue

"The police need to be more understanding and not so forceful. Abusive force is not necessary. You have to have them, and not all are bad. Just like any group, I think they are working on weeding out the bad ones, but it takes a while. They are getting better, but they are slow to change. It's a slow process. Cell phone videos help. Portland has a huge drug problem, and considering, overall, they are doing a pretty good job."

- David Wheat  
Starbucks on Grand



Ron Sanford

"It's a dichotomy. They do good and bad. Personally I haven't had experiences lately because I quit drinking. They used to wait for me outside stores. Some are good people who want to help, but as a system, they need tougher standards and more education for people who have authority over others."

- Ron Sanford  
Food Carts on Stark

"Sometimes on Max, if I don't have fare, I think they should just kick us off, but to write up a ticket and give us a court date, when they know we have no money to pay ... I think law enforcement posing big fines on people who can't afford fare, it's like they are thumbing their nose at us. We have to get from one place to another. If we don't have fare, just kick us off."

"Other than that, I don't think cops are harassing us. I see at homeless shelters if someone is causing problems, they remove them. They don't throw them to the ground, they don't bully. I saw two Portland cops at the front door peeking their heads in, they weren't getting in his face, they were diligent and patient. I've seen them talk guys down."

"I think the lack of restrooms is a big problem. People get arrested for that, but they don't want to do that, they don't want to expose themselves but there's nowhere to go. We need day johns or Porta Potties. It isn't that expensive."

- John Kadubec  
Standard Insurance Building and OHSU

"I was walking through a mall, there was a guy the police were harassing. He was homeless, he had bags. I offered him a cigarette and walked him outside. Smoking calms me down. He calmed down right away. They should help like that."

- Char  
SCRAP



Charles McPherson

"I think there are good ones. I know one really good one. And I was impressed with that statement from the police (Daryl Turner, Police Union President). He said it was the services that need to improve. He said the services for homeless people are underfunded. ... I think

instead of hiring more police, they should pay to have mental health specialists in the car with the police, and they have to listen to them."

- Charles McPherson  
Southwest Second Avenue  
and Morrison Street

"I have seven brothers and sisters, nephews, on the police force, so I'm in the middle. I don't think they are doing that much good. Police should get specific. I wish they would familiarize themselves with who the habitual offenders are, not just scoping and eyeballing people. I respect the police but they should be more aware when they walk a beat. There are some habitual offenders trashing things, screaming and yelling."

- Robert Waters  
Downtown Nordstrom



Kris Beck

"I don't think it's all them. The police can't be the first responders. We need other responders, especially for mental health calls. We need more trauma care. I watched when the people at Safeway (on 10th and Jefferson)

called the police for a lady who was screaming and yelling, they made the call for her safety. Five cop cars showed up, 10 cops surrounded one tiny lady. Why call them? I could have handled her myself, I could have calmed her down and I'm five foot three. They just freaked her out more. Why not have a mental health unit that can respond? Also, we need to stop the blue line of silence. There needs to be accountability from outside the system."

- Kris Beck



Mark Rodriguez

"I was at Sixth and Burnside and this woman was there, all beat up. There were policemen everywhere. I asked one what happened to her, who did this to her, and the policeman said, 'We didn't do it.' Everyone is at odds with each other and defensive. How did we get here?"

- Mark Rodriguez  
Goose Hollow

"They are needed, but I would tell them to be patient with (people with mental illness). Be kind. Truly try to be helpful."

- Jan K.  
Powell's on Burnside



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