

Memories and Hopes for Portland by Anne Kelly Feeney

Having been born in Vanport in 1943, moving away before the flood, I loved our large family existence at 31st and Couch. Portland was segregated, which I did not notice, although I met only with our Black housekeeper. She was lovely.

We left our doors unlocked always, even when we went away for a weekend. Spent lots of time in Laurelhurst Park, rode the bus alone downtown to the Art Museum at age 8.

Over the 38 years we have lived on Alameda, we have had minor petty crimes, but overall feel extremely safe. I remember many years when West Side friends were reluctant to come to the East Side. Now our main streets are hubs of restaurants and shops, and lovely walking neighborhoods.

My concerns are two: homelessness and traffic. I propose this for homelessness, having spent several evenings taking food in a van from our church kitchen to small groups of tent campers, mainly along the East Side Industrial water front blocks. The folks I have interviewed are so addled by drugs and anxiety, they will not seek a large shelter. They say it is too confusing for their brains with all the shouting, fighting and stealing. They have a beloved dog that protects their tents. The tent grouping is no more than five or so. They lean on each other. Continuing to live like this, they are usually dead by 60.

I propose that the city and county arrange for prefab tiny houses containing only a bedroom or a studio kitchen. Place these houses in groups of four on a single lot with one communal meeting room including a shower and toilets. They will have permanent low cost housing and a chance to build community with each other. Social workers should periodically check in with them. These folks are very unlikely to work. But with stable housing, this may change.

Turns out there is a start of such a vision at Agape Church of Christ, working with Church of the Nazarene East Portland on Powell. The number of tiny houses is too many in my estimation, about 20, but it is a start.

As for traffic, I feel the only hope is that people like us give up our second car, get used to the bus or bike, and move to using a Lyft service. Side streets should be set aside with no cars, used for bikes only.