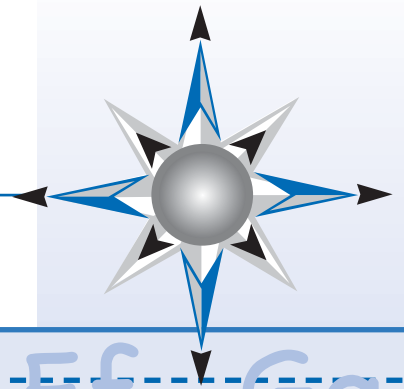


# CONNECTIONS

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The Journal of the Coalition for a Livable Future



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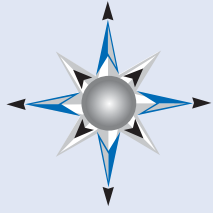
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*Connections* is the journal of the Coalition for a Livable Future. Founded in 1994, CLF is an alliance of 70 community organizations working together to strengthen and broaden regional planning efforts to ensure a healthy, equitable, and sustainable future for the greater Portland region. Through research, policy advocacy, and public education, CLF works to create and preserve affordable housing; ensure clean water; protect open space, wildlife habitat and farmland; create living wage jobs; provide real transportation choices; and end hunger in our community.

CLF emphasizes connections between the issues and between the cities, towns and counties that make up our region. Thus, we strive to promote "regionalism," which recognizes that the communities within our urban area are interdependent and that cooperation will improve the economic, social, and environmental health of the metropolitan region as a whole.

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**The Benefits of Joining a Coalition** — By joining the Coalition, you help create a stronger, collective voice for a just, sustainable region. A diverse membership allows us to understand each other's issues and concerns, to find common ground and to share resources and information.

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## Meet Martha McLennan, CLF Board Member



**Martha McLennan** is the Executive Director of Northwest Housing Alternatives (NHA). Based in Milwaukie, NHA builds new homes and new opportunities for people with low incomes across Oregon. NHA's affordable housing benefits seniors, families and people with special needs. Before joining NHA in 2002, Martha was the Housing Manager for the City of Portland Bureau for Housing and Community Development. She has over 25 years of experience in the community development field, and a considerable record of securing resources and managing successful, innovative community development programs.

Martha is a Portland native with a deep love of the Metro area. She enjoys city life, browsing neighborhood shops, farmer's markets and bookstores. Lately she's been spending time exploring our many urban trails. Martha says CLF gives her the chance to work on the wide range of issues that make Portland a great place to live.

# The Great Equalizer? Inequities in Our Region's Schools

By Irina V. Sharkova and Teresa Huntsinger

**H**orace Mann, sometimes called the father of American public education, said "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of man, the balance-wheel of the social machinery." He viewed universal public schools as places where social problems can be solved and where young people can learn how to participate in their community. How can this great equalizer be effective when some schools have fewer resources than others? A fundamental prerequisite for an equitable society is that all children — regardless of income, ethnicity, or ability — have access to a quality education.

In this issue of *Connections*, we examine our K-12 public education system, a critical component of our region's livability that is often left out of planning discussions. Metro's 2040 plan says nothing about schools (and it was never expected to), and there is no regional thinking about the relationships between the school districts in the metropolitan area. Yet changes in our school system affect development and growth patterns and vice versa. Parents look closely at school quality when choosing where to live, and real estate advertisements commonly include information about the quality of neighborhood schools. Families with lower incomes are limited to school districts where they can find affordable housing.

Education needs to be a part of regional planning. In today's knowledge-based economy, a strong education system makes for a more competitive region by developing a qualified workforce and attracting businesses whose employees seek a quality education for their children. The articles in this issue explore relationships between education and several other aspects of our region's livability. But first, to put those discussions in context, we would like to provide some information about the inequities in our region's schools.

Inequity between well-off schools and the rest has grown stronger in recent years.

## The Lay of the Land in our Region's Schools

Public schools face serious threats to their ability to provide a quality education, and the one we hear about most often in the news is school funding. There are formidable disparities in many types of resources among our region's school districts, and among schools within the same district. Data from CLF's forthcoming Regional Equity Atlas looks at school demographics and performance measures with a goal of better understanding the disparities among our public schools and their relationship to regional growth patterns.

The six-county Portland-Vancouver Metro region includes 46 school districts; they enroll over 320,000 students, or every sixth resident of the region. The five largest among them — Portland, Beaverton, and Hillsboro in Oregon, and Evergreen and Vancouver in Washington state — educate nearly half of all students, while the 10 smallest districts serve fewer than 1,000 students each. The size of school districts does not seem to impact their financial resources: the larger urban districts are only slightly more likely to receive more revenue per pupil, a fact that disregards the higher costs of operating schools in urban areas.

What does impact resource levels is the socio-economic status of school districts: districts with higher household incomes tend to receive higher total revenues per pupil and spend more per pupil on instruction-related costs than those with lower household incomes. (See Map 1 on page 10.) These districts also rely more heavily

on local property taxes, especially in Oregon: four districts with median household income above \$64,000 in 2000 (Riverdale, Lake Oswego, West Linn-Wilsonville, and Sherwood) collected 44 to 46 percent of their revenue from property taxes, while four districts with median household income at \$40,500 or below (McMinnville, Sheridan, David Douglas, and Willamina) received only 13 to 25 percent of their revenue from property taxes. This demonstrates that wealthier districts are more able to raise local taxes to support their schools.

Inequity between well-off schools and the rest has grown stronger in recent years. One aspect of this is that poverty among school-age children is affecting more K-12 students in a greater number of schools. Schools with 75 to 100 percent of students receiving free and reduced-price meals are no longer limited to North/Northeast Portland or the downtown areas of Vancouver and Hillsboro; they are now in Beaverton, David Douglas, Forest Grove, Parkrose, Southeast Portland, and Reynolds school districts. (See Map 1 on page 10.)

Schools and districts with growing poverty are also serving increasing percentages of students of color. This increase has been particularly pronounced on the Oregon side of the

➤ Great Equalizer, continued on page 10.

# Stability and Success: The Housing-Schools Connection

By Kate Allen

DECLINING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT  
CLASSROOMS BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

NO CHILDREN IN THE PEARL  
ENROLLMENT EXPLODES IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

**H**eadlines like these have appeared in metro region news in the last year. They indicate the significant challenges we face in our schools as population grows and demographic patterns shift in the region. What's not so apparent in these headlines, but is a critical factor underlying them, is how access to affordable housing fits into the picture. Our region's current housing imbalance contributes significantly to problems facing our schools, and we need to build upon initial efforts to stabilize families and create successful schools by strengthening the housing-schools connection.

When neighborhoods include housing that is affordable and attractive to a diverse population of families, and children can attend their local school, a stable living and learning environment is created. This helps form lasting social bonds and increases success in school. Many of us can remember walking to and from school with friends, playing on ball fields or attending summer recreation programs at our neighborhood schools, and having parents and neighbors "keep an eye out" as we came and went. Unfortunately, many children in our community today do not have these stable school and home experiences.

## Housing Stability and Education

For lower income families, residential stability, including opportunities for homeownership, contributes both to better neighborhoods and to better schools. When hardworking families are unable to afford rents and are forced to move their children from school to school, the effects range from a loss of social ties to dropping out of school. The importance of housing stability to children's education is illustrated in material compiled by *Affordable Housing NOW!*, a movement of affordable housing advocates and tenants whose goal is to secure new resources for affordable housing in the Portland Metro area. School mobility (measured by the percentage of students transferred in and out of a school in any given year) results when families must move to find affordable housing.

Higher school mobility rates affect the entire system by disrupting classroom dynamics and the sequence of lesson plans. This affects all students in the classroom and stretches staff resources. Mobility rates range from 45-80 percent in some urban schools and 25-40 percent in affected suburban schools. Students who live in poverty are more likely to be affected since they have fewer housing and education choices<sup>1</sup>. Housing instability has a direct impact on a child's education. When a family moves, it often means that school-aged children will have to change schools, disrupting their education. Families living in poverty are more likely to make frequent moves due

to the difficulty of finding permanent affordable housing. Students who move often have lower attendance rates, negatively affecting school achievement. In one study, average reading scores for students who moved three or more times were half those of students who did not move.<sup>2</sup> Students who are highly mobile during the school year can fall four to six months behind their peers with stable housing,<sup>3</sup> and children who change schools more than three times before eighth grade are at least four times more likely to drop out of school.<sup>4</sup>

Changing schools unravels social networks and other support systems for children and families, and frequently has an impact on a child's social and emotional behavior. Moving often damages or completely severs important social ties that are useful for cognitive and social development.<sup>4</sup> Parents and

guardians are often less able to participate in their child's education after a move as it takes time for parents to adjust to the new living situation, become familiar with the child's new teacher and learn about homework expectations.<sup>3</sup> A parent's job situation may also preclude school involvement if the new school is not near the job. Children who have attended two or more schools before the age of nine, or three or more schools between the ages of nine and fourteen, are reported to have a higher score on the Behavior Problem Index than children who are more stable.<sup>5</sup>

Children and families that live in inadequate housing and poverty are at higher risk of developing health problems, which can further impair learning. Mold and pest conditions in sub-standard housing lead to asthma and other respiratory infections. Childhood exposure to lead, commonly found in paint in older homes, can cause behavioral problems, lower intelligence, and health problems. When families are unable to afford rent and food, children are frequently diagnosed with anemia.<sup>6</sup>

Our  
neighborhoods  
and our schools  
are suffering  
because we  
are not  
creating mixed  
communities.





Residents of New Columbia will soon have a new elementary school thanks to an innovative partnership. Photo © Housing Authority of Portland.

## Urban and Suburban Families are Affected

The connection between housing and schools is evident throughout our region, in both urban and suburban communities. Understanding and nurturing this connection will be vital for our communities as the economics and demographics of the region change. Some of our region's hottest housing markets are increasingly childless, a condition attributed to high housing prices and an emphasis on development types more attractive to singles, couples and retirees, but not families. As part of the same trend, the funding base of neighborhood schools is declining in historically family-friendly communities, in particular, those in the Portland Public Schools (PPS) and Riverdale districts, as they experience shrinking enrollment when families of modest means move away to find more affordable housing. Meanwhile, Clark, Clackamas and Washington County schools experienced enrollment increases from 10-30 per cent from 1990 to 2003, and census data indicate those increases include high numbers of families living at or below the poverty line, and a high percentage of households where English is not the first language.

For communities dealing with the challenge of growing enrollment, and for communities facing shrinking enrollment, availability and quality of affordable housing are key factors. In a paper written for The Enterprise Foundation, "Schools, Community & Development, Erasing the Boundaries," author Tony Proscio, former editor of the *Miami Herald* and a consultant on urban affairs, frames the issue precisely. "Neighborhoods, like schools, thrive on economic diversity and social interaction. Mixed communities where people of different income levels, household sizes and housing needs are intermingled not only represent good urban planning, they are an important ingredient in good education as well. Right now our neighborhoods and our schools are suffering because we are not creating mixed communities."

## Inspiring Models Strengthen the Connection

When families and children are at the center of community, school and neighborhood planning, these grim outcomes can be reversed or avoided. National and local examples of schools, business and community working together are inspiring. The following approaches to strengthening the housing-school connection are particularly attractive because they have roots in this region, and they have a high potential as replicable models.

### Strengthening Programs in Existing Schools

In Oregon, the Small Schools Initiative is a program of Employers for Excellence in Education, and is generously funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust. The program establishes small focused programs within existing high schools, to raise educational achievement, and increase the percentage of students continuing on to higher education. Four high schools in the metro area, all of which serve low-income neighborhoods and have experienced declining enrollment and student achievement, Madison and Marshall in outer SE Portland, Roosevelt in North Portland and Liberty in the Hillsboro School District, are involved in the initiative.

### Community Use of Existing Schools

Access to social service and community education opportunities is improved by opening the doors of schools to offer programs like the SUN Schools (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) program, operated jointly by Multnomah County, the cities of Portland and Gresham, eight school districts within the county, several social service agencies, and other partners. SUN Schools, located predominantly in low-income neighborhoods, help students and communities succeed by expanding the use of neighborhood schools to include programs for students and families before or after regular school hours, focusing on academics, recreation and enrichment. Health and social services, such as career counseling, are also provided. Many activities at a SUN School are open to the entire community.

### Schools and Community Revitalization

Across the country, communities undertaking revitalization are placing schools at the center of new mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods, which replace deteriorated housing and blight. In the Enterprise paper referenced previously, developer Richard Baron, principal with McCormack Baron Salazar, cites the importance of the community school as a key to successful housing redevelopment. He describes the process of determining school needs and

➤ *Stability and Success, continued on page 13.*

<sup>1</sup> Hanushek, Eric A. "Schooling in the Mobile," May 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Family Housing Fund, "Kids Mobility Project Report," 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Varlas, Laura, "Slowing the Revolving Door: Schools Reach Out to Mobile Families," in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Education Update, Vol. 44, No. 7, November, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> North Central Regional Education Laboratory, "Student Mobility's Effect on Academic Achievement," 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, "Frequent School Changes Tied to Behavior Problem," May 4, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Boston Medical Center and Housing America, "There's No Place Like Home: How America's Housing Crisis Threatens Our Children," 1999-2002.

# Learning Suitable to Life and Livability: Innovation through Learning Gardens

By Pramod Parajuli, Ph.D., Portland State University

*We are not human beings having ecological experience;  
we are ecological beings having human experience*

— Thomas Berry, author of *The Great Work*



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**E**cological educator David Orr recently commented to me that “the ecological crisis is in every way a crisis of education” because the disorder of ecosystems reflects a prior disorder of mind, an imbalance in the values and world-views we have accepted as an industrial society. He also aptly urges us to consider that this is not only a problem *in education* but one *of education*. I agree. If it was only an issue in education, we could address that by changing curriculum, or by offering professional development for teachers. The issue is about education itself, the underlying values and beliefs we hold dear about education. Why do we teach? And what do we learn? Indeed, as readers of this journal, you and I are interested not only in finding more effective learning strategies but in exploring the very bold and daring questions: What should learning be for? Both in content and process, what kind of learning will give us a satisfying life not only for humans but also for other species?

Please join me in thinking about three L-words: **life**, **livability** and **learning**. These are the precise three words we at the Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Culture and Learning (PIECL), a graduate program at Portland State University, have been incubating for the last four years. To find answers, we work at the university and also with Portland Public Schools and the community. As teachers, researchers, scholars and activists, our faculty and 70-plus students want to effectively engage in making this world livable for humans and the more than human world. We probe deeper because we are convinced that an ecologically sustainable world also needs to be bio-culturally diverse and socially just.

In the same spirit, we are currently creating “learning gardens” in eight Portland Public Schools. The goal of Learning Gardens is to provide food- and garden-based education for K-12 children and youth. Through these learning gardens, we seek not only to improve academic achievement, multiculturalism, and healthy food habits but also to promote development of a whole child by cultivating self-esteem, motivation, sense of purpose in life and self-efficacy. We focus on garden- and food-

based learning because growing gardens, harvesting food and eating are perhaps the most primal, intimate and sensuous ways we connect to the rest of humanity and nature. We have also found that subjects such as science, math, social sciences and humanities can be enriched through garden-based learning.

The issue is about education itself, the underlying values and beliefs we hold dear about education.

Why do we teach?  
And what do we learn?

The learning gardens movement builds on the convergence of two important forces in Portland. First, there is the resurgence of local food economy and culture in the greater Portland area. Not only is the number of grocery stores that buy and sell organic and locally-produced food increasing, farmer’s markets are also on the rise. I am inspired to note that in Oregon the number of farms has risen from 26,753 in 1974 to 40,033 in 2002, the latest year for which figures are available (*NY Times*, January 4, 2006). This upswing is primarily due to consumer demand for local, organic and seasonal foods. Secondly, Portland is increasingly becoming a global village where diverse communities from around the world are bringing their own

agro-ecological, culinary and healthcare traditions. However, Portland’s children, especially those from low-income and multicultural backgrounds, could do much better academically and eat healthier food. Inspired by these trends and considering the growth of the whole child, we are designing these learning gardens such that they can simultaneously:

- **promote multicultural learning** as represented in the diverse agro-ecological and culinary traditions of parent communities;
- **enthuse interdisciplinary inquiry** in math, science, social sciences, arts and literature;
- **foster intergenerational learning** where PPS and PSU students, teachers, and parents become co-learners;
- **cultivate multisensory learning** through not only head but also hand, heart and all other senses; and finally,
- **enhance local food economy and culture** by growing and consuming local, organic, seasonal (when possible) and sustainably produced foods.



While each of the eight Portland Public Schools are creating their own learning gardens and gradually integrating food and gardens in their curriculum and Oregon Benchmark standards, we serve their curricular and professional development needs through two learning garden facilities. JEAN's Urban Forest Farm is a two-acre rented facility surrounded by native forest and adjacent to Johnson Creek. In addition to a one-acre permaculture garden, it hosts an outdoor kitchen, cobb oven, and a watershed restoration project. Our second facility is located next to Lane Middle School in Southeast Portland. A joint project of PSU and the City of Portland, Learning Gardens Laboratory (LGlub) is a 10-plus-acre site, with full garden facilities including several greenhouses and an adjacent community garden.

Both LGlub and JEAN's Farm have begun to host site visits by children and teachers from local elementary and middle schools. It is our wildest dream to equip JEAN's Farm and the LGlub to provide K-12 students, teachers and parents with direct experiences in farming, multi-cultural agro-ecological and herbal traditions, cooking, sustainable and permacultural design, sustainable energy technologies, and native plant and watershed restoration. Most uniquely, these two sites also provide Portland State University students opportunities to engage in a variety of activities. They learn how to design, garden, develop curriculum, outreach to multi-cultural parent communities, and conduct ethnographic research on local food economy and food cultures. These opportunities are available for PSU students either as site coordinators of the learning gardens project or as part of their community-based learning experience (CBL). Portland State University is nationally noted for CBL opportunities through which students take a four-credit course and spend 20-30 hours working with a community organization. Each academic year more than 200 PSU students contribute their CBL hours in school-based learning gardens.

By considering every stakeholder as a learner (and co-learner) and seeking to address their learning needs simultaneously, we are incubating a unique and a mutually beneficial partnership between Portland State University, the City, Portland Public Schools and the larger community. In order to offer a truly diverse learning experience, we are connecting and networking with Portland Community Gardens, Tryon Life Community Farm, 47th Avenue Farm, Luscher Farm, Zenger Farm, and Growing Gardens.

Growing gardens, harvesting food and eating are perhaps the most primal, intimate and sensuous ways we connect to the rest of humanity and nature.

While these organizations are championing, educating and popularizing the notion of sustainable food economy and culture, there are hundreds of family-run farms that grow organic and sustainably-produced food in the greater Portland area. They are at the core of this emergent local food economy and culture. As schools begin to shift towards purchasing their food locally, these farming enterprises will be an integral part of the emergent farm-to-cafeteria network. Through programs such as Food-based Ecological Education Design (FEED) and Learning Gardens, we hope to boost this demand from the bottom up and prepare a new generation of growers and consumers of food that is locally and sustainably produced.

In closing, let me bring you back to those three words: **life, livability** and **learning**. Born and raised in a peasant family in the remote Nepalese Himalayan foothills, I am duly inspired by Kentucky born and raised farmer-poet, Wendell Berry, who aptly urges us to consider food as an agricultural act. I want to add: "agriculture is an ecological act" and "ecology is an act of learning." In order to facilitate "earth-body" learning, we consider soil and gardens as the primary site for our multisensory awakening and being. If there is a crisis in education or one of education, we are addressing that by acting and learning ecologically and multiculturally. One of the inspiring teachers from Buckman Elementary School, Tim Hahn, speaks well of our sentiment:

"FEED is a great starting point for children because it really addresses more than just the science and more than just the food. I mean it is really about our culture and questioning the way we want to live."

A learning that is suitable to life and livability might have just begun in Portland. You might be a student, a teacher, a parent or an inhabitant of this region. I want to welcome you to join us in this fascinating educational journey. ✨



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*Pramod Parajuli, Ph.D. is a professor at Portland State University. He co-founded (with Professor Dilafruz Williams) the Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Culture and Learning (PIIECL), an interdisciplinary graduate program at PSU, and serves as its executive director. Innovator of the concept of learning gardens, he also directs the FEED and learning gardens projects.*

*For further information, visit, [www.piiecl.pdx.edu](http://www.piiecl.pdx.edu) and [www.feed.pdx.edu](http://www.feed.pdx.edu).*



Portland State University students enjoy learning and teaching at JEAN's Urban Forest Farm.

“For a state that touts itself as having proactive planners, it certainly doesn't trickle down to schools.”

— Beaverton Schools facilities planner Jan Youngquist, in *The Oregonian*.

## Giving Schools a Seat at the Planning Table

By Holly Pruett

When Pauline McGuire and her husband Stan moved to rural Clackamas County, they expected their children to get a great education in Oregon's public schools, just as Pauline and her parents before her had. She never imagined she would need a shoehorn to wedge her son into his classroom.

When Pauline's son Mitchell enrolled in kindergarten at Oregon Trail Elementary, the school was over-capacity by 175 students. Now that he's in second grade, the school built for 550 children is overflowing with more than 800.

Mitchell and his classmates are being schooled in “portables” with no windows and a long, solitary dash through the rain to get to the main building that has one bathroom for every 200 children. Lunch service begins before 10:30 am to cycle through all students who still end up in long lines just to toss out their trash. Mitchell's bus schedule has changed four times this fall already. Once he boards the bus, he's one of 85 kids grades K-6 in the care of one adult driver.

With another baby at home, Pauline went to her school's PTA meeting looking for answers. When another parent asked what was being done to deal with the relentless growth in the community and its impact on already over-crowded schools, they found out, according to Pauline: “There was no answer. No one was taking any responsibility for the impact of growth on our schools.”

Pauline's observation is confirmed by regional planners. “Schools are not at the table,” says Metro Councilor Brian Newman. With Metro's 2040 growth projections due to be realized 20 years ahead of schedule, no provisions have been made for the tsunami of students that will arrive in our

schools. As Beaverton Schools facilities planner Jan Youngquist commented in *The Oregonian*: “For a state that touts itself as having proactive planners, it certainly doesn't trickle down to schools.”

Over 1,000 new lots are currently under construction in Happy Valley, with 800 more family-friendly homes approved. The North Clackamas district already uses 49 portable classrooms. Beaverton, the state's fastest growing district, uses 173 portable buildings. Beaverton schools grew by approximately 600 students last year, and officials anticipate another 700 students next year.

All of this growth — not just in Washington and Clackamas counties, but in the Gorge, and Central and Southern Oregon — and no provision for the schools required by the growth.

## Bringing Schools to the Growth Planning Table

Most states have programs in place to direct funds to school districts for facilities and capital expenditures. Oregon has none. Our difficulty providing stable and adequate funding for school operations following the 1990 property tax roll-back of Measure 5, is well-known. In investment per pupil, Oregon has fallen from 16th to 31st in the nation. Our children now attend the country's second-largest elementary classes within a school year that is almost three weeks shorter than the national average. The revenue for schools is not keeping pace with rising costs — and that's just for the funds that cover teacher salaries, schools buses, and other key supports. For facilities, Oregon's school districts are on their own, solely reliant on taxpayers to pass periodic bonds.

Our neighbors, Washington and California, and nine others states have adopted a common sense solution to generate funds for school facilities that helps offset the cost of new growth to the community. School Impact Fees require developers to pay part of the cost of the school construction or renovations needed to provide the growing community with high quality public school facilities.



School Impact Fees would help us build new classrooms as our communities grow.  
© Steven Bloch, Portland Schools Foundation.



In Oregon, developers can be required to pay for new sewers, roads, water runoff systems and parks when they build new homes, but they do not have to contribute a cent for schools. Unfortunately for schoolchildren and for taxpayers, Oregon law does not define schools as “critical infrastructure.”

Currently, growth in Oregon does not come close to paying for itself. When growth requires new or renovated schools, school districts must ask taxpayers to approve capital bonds. Sometimes they even dip into scarce operating funds to cover urgently needed capital improvements.

School Impact Fees provide another tool. They won’t replace the need for bonds, but they reduce the cost of growth to long-time residents. With Impact Fees, developers share the cost of school construction and capital improvements with longtime residents, including many seniors, who are continually asked to pay for school bonds.



“How can you issue a building permit for 550 new houses and not think about schools? You’ve got to be kidding me!”

— Pauline McGuire

## David Versus Goliath

Pauline McGuire knew about School Impact Fees from family in California. After that first PTA meeting two years ago, she started asking questions. “Development was happening all around us and schools weren’t being considered at all,” she says. “It just didn’t make sense.”

What she found out made her angry. “How can you issue a building permit for 550 new houses and not think about schools? You’ve got to be kidding me!” she recalls thinking. “No one was working together as a team, thinking about what it means for the kids to be in such overcrowded schools.”

Pauline and her neighbor Julie Volpel started doing research and raising the issue with other parents. With a team of other Stand for Children members, they went door-to-door in the high growth portions of Clackamas County. Ultimately, they talked to over 400 households and turned 170 community

members out for a televised County Commission hearing. While they convinced commissioners to uphold a minor regulation – and scared the nation’s largest homebuilder, DR Horton, into making a modest voluntary contribution to the district — they learned that local jurisdictions’ hands are tied by state law.

For the past several legislative sessions, legislators including Senators Kurt Schrader of Canby and Charlie Ringo of Beaverton have attempted to give school districts the ability to charge School Impact Fees. These bills have all failed due to the lobbying strength of the Oregon Home Builders Association.

Pauline and Julie expanded the scope of their organizing to other fast-growing communities around Oregon — from Cascade Locks, Hood River and The Dalles, to Bend-LaPine, Redmond and Sisters, to Brookings, Medford and Ashland, to Sherwood, Beaverton and Hillsboro — gathering support from school leaders and local residents for an end to the state law prohibiting schools from being considered “critical infrastructure.”

Many traveled to Salem to lobby for Senator Schrader and Ringo’s bills. But even the Democratic-controlled Senate was unwilling to act in the face of the homebuilders’ influence.

## Adequate School Facilities or Legislative Gridlock?

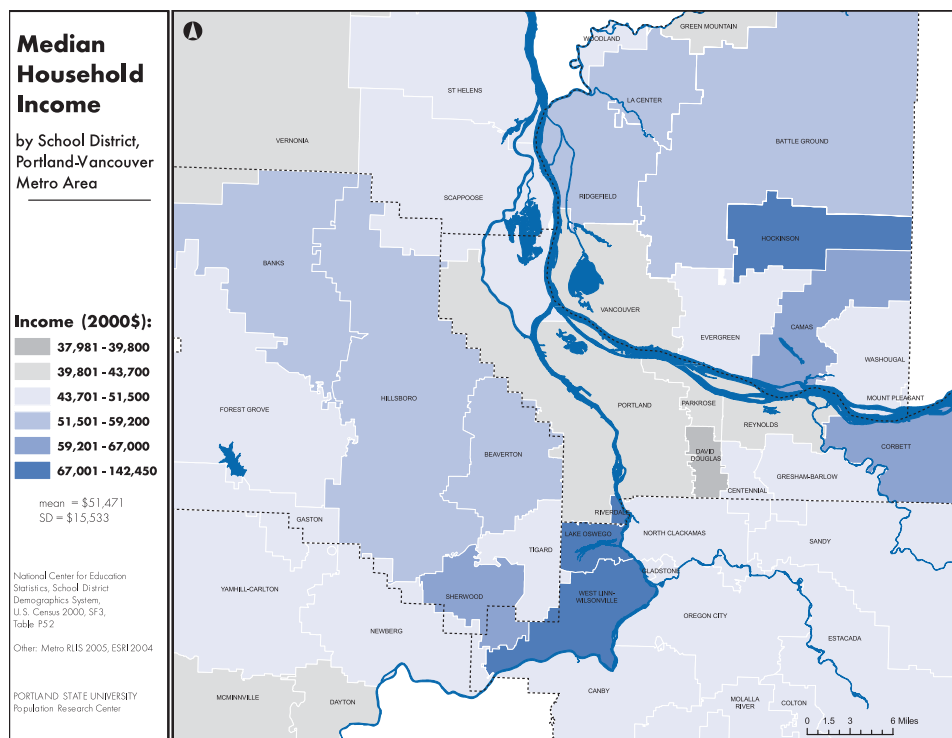
Thwarted by the power of special interests at the Legislature, the North Clackamas activists took their case to other Stand for Children members. A vote of the full membership confirmed strong statewide support for seeking enactment of School Impact Fees.

Stand for Children members are now poised to make this issue a litmus test for elected officials who proclaim their support for schools on the election trail. Public opinion polling shows voters want developers to pay their fair share. Grassroots activists around the state are gearing up to make sure the Legislature knows the public understands the problem and expects them to enact a solution. Will candidates and legislators commit to meeting the needs of school children? Will homebuilders recognize that their clients need adequate school facilities too?

It’s well past time to give schools a seat at the growth-planning table. School Impact Fees would provide school districts with a predictable, steady stream of funds for capital improvements. With Oregon growing by an estimated 1.5 million people in the next 20 years, and children already experiencing overcrowded classrooms, we urgently need our legislators to include schools in the critical infrastructure our communities plan for and pay for as they grow. ✨

*Holly Pruett is the Deputy Director of Stand for Children, a grassroots organization that advocates for improvements to and funding for programs that give every child a fair chance in life.*

Map 1. Median Household Income by School District (2000)



## ➤ Great Equalizer, continued from page 3.

region, in the largest districts: Portland, Beaverton, and Hillsboro, but also in the David Douglas, Parkrose, and Reynolds districts, plus schools in the urban part of Forest Grove. By 2003, few schools in these districts had student populations composed of more than two-thirds whites.

Growth in new subdivisions has brought its costs: overcrowded classrooms in fast-growing school districts such as Oregon City, Tigard, Sherwood, and parts of Hillsboro, and shrinking enrollment at schools in the Portland School District. Perhaps a testimony to the benefits of more adequate funding, schools in Clark County appear to have managed their growth better than schools in the rest of the region. (See Map 2 on page 11.) For example, no elementary school north of the Columbia had a student-teacher ratio above 24:1 during the 2003 school year.

The flipside of the fast-growing enrollment in suburban districts is the enrollment decline in the core of the region: Portland Public Schools. (See Map 3 on page 11.) About \$5,400 a year leaves the district with every departing student<sup>1</sup>, which increases per-pupil costs of operating schools, resulting in program and school closures. This, in turn, may entice more families with children to relocate to districts with newer schools and richer school offerings, accelerating the cycle.

Growing inequities among school districts across the region have profound implications beyond the realm of public education. School-age children and their parents constitute nearly half<sup>2</sup> of the entire population of our region, and their needs and preferences affect every aspect of the region's livability: where and how we build new houses, how we commute, where and whether we protect natural habitat, and so on.

Regional leaders in the fields of housing, sustainability, transportation, and land use are increasingly coming to recognize that these issues are inextricably linked to education. A strong public education system is critical to the development of a sustainable, livable, and equitable region, and it is time to use all the available tools to ensure that we have a world-class education system. ✨

*Irina V. Sharkova is a research assistant professor at the Population Research Center and School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University.*

*Teresa Huntsinger is Program Director for the Coalition for a Livable Future.*

*Much of the content of this article is condensed from the schools chapter of CLF's forthcoming Regional Equity Atlas.*

*The maps were created by Kenneth Radin at the Population Research Center.*

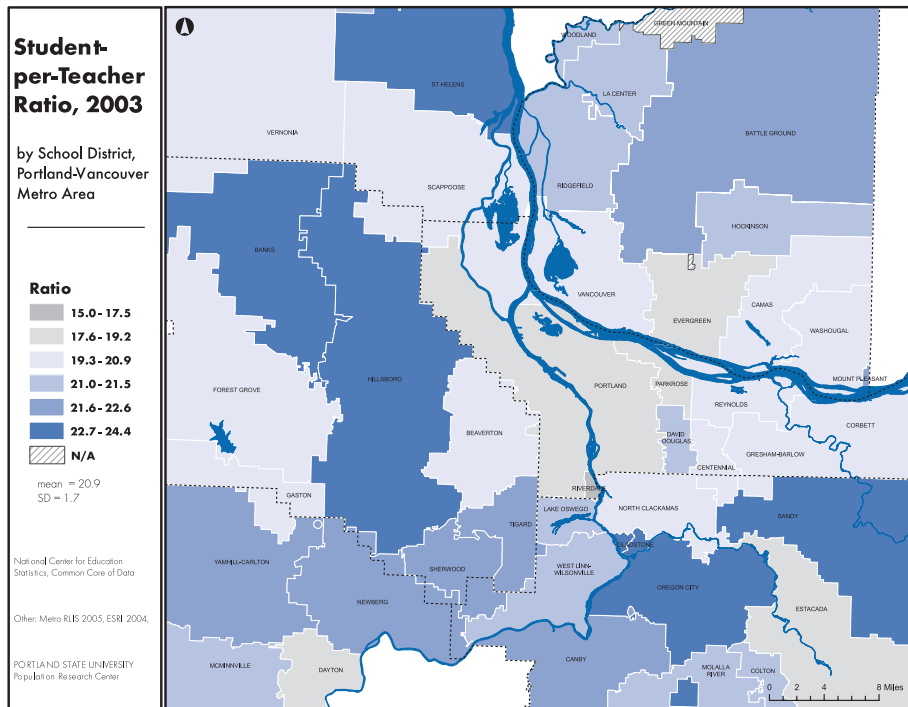
Yet this increase has not been uniform: most schools in well-funded or outlying districts on both sides of the Columbia remained 90-100 percent white (Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Riverdale, Sherwood, and West Linn-Wilsonville in Oregon, and Battle Ground, Camas, and Hockinson in Washington). White and better-off families from within and outside the region and their school-age children have been relocating to new subdivisions near the Portland-Metro UGB and in Clark County. Families of color have been partially succeeding them in less desirable, low-income parts of the urban core and inner suburbs. Increasing prices of single-family homes in already attractive or gentrifying parts of the central city have made single-family homes unaffordable to many families with school age children, precipitating their relocation. They are often replaced by singles or families without school-age children.

<sup>1</sup>Steven Carter. "Portland's stand for schools isn't tilting to the left," *The Oregonian*, Sunday, January 29, 2006.

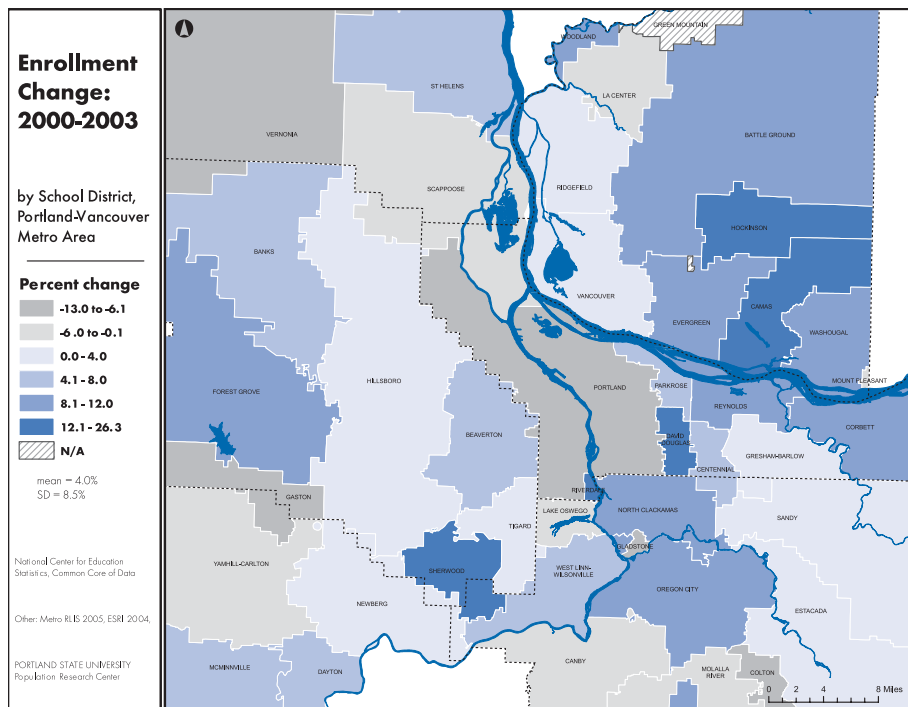
<sup>2</sup>48 percent, per the 2000 Census.



Map 2. Students-Teacher Ratio by School District (2003)



Map 3. Percent Change in Total Enrollment by School District (2000-2003)



We are on the verge of publishing our Regional Equity Atlas, and we have already begun using the research to advocate for equity in the context of the 2006 Greenspaces Bond Measure package that Metro has proposed.

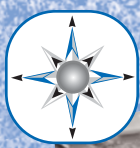
CLF strongly supports Metro's referral of a Greenspaces Bond Measure to voters next fall. We view the measure as a critical strategy for protecting livability, water quality and the natural systems upon which we depend. We also see the bond measure as an opportunity to address some of the disparities that exist among communities with respect to their access to nature. That's where our Regional Equity Atlas research comes in!

Through our research, we found that 36% of the Portland-Metro population (inside the urban growth boundary) lives farther than a quarter-mile from a natural area. While in many respects it is quite encouraging that 64% of us have nature close to home, our goal is that everyone, including current and future generations, has this opportunity, and the many health, social, ecological and cultural benefits that go along with it.

We also found a strong relationship between proximity to nature and how wealthy or poor people are. In general, poor neighborhoods have less access to nature than wealthier ones. Seventy percent of neighborhoods with the worst access to nature have above average poverty, while only 14% of neighborhoods with the best access to nature have above average poverty.

We are advocating that one component of the bond measure package help "re-nature" neighborhoods that currently don't have nature nearby. In addition, we are proposing that priority be given to greenspaces projects in low-income neighborhoods. We believe that it is appropriate for Metro to address these neighborhood-level disparities proactively in regional policy.

To learn more about the Greenspaces Bond Measure Campaign, please visit [www.urbanfauna.org](http://www.urbanfauna.org).



# CLF Notes



## Allison Adcox Joins CLF Staff

We are thrilled to introduce you to **Allison Adcox**, CLF's new part-time administrative assistant. Bringing Allison on board gives us a total of four staff positions. Allison is currently a student in the Community Development program at Portland State University. She is a "native" of the region, raised in Beaverton and now living in SE Portland with her husband Luke and her dog Django. Allison's community involvement extends back to her days volunteering at the Audubon Society of Portland as a high school student.



More than 300 people packed the Wonder Ballroom on November 4th for our LAUGH for Livability event. It was a tremendous success, with good energy, great attendance, plenty of laughs and fabulous music. *LAUGH* will be back again next year!

*Thank you to our unforgettable performers:* Dick Benner, Jo Ann Bowman, Senator Ryan Deckert, Steve Einhorn & Kate Power, Ashleigh Flynn, Karen Frost, Ashley Henry & Derek Smith, Alan Hipolito, Metro Councilor Robert Liberty, Jonathan Poisner, Bob Stacey, and Representative Carolyn Tomei.

*Thank you to our sponsors:* Vernier Software & Technology, and Willamette Week.

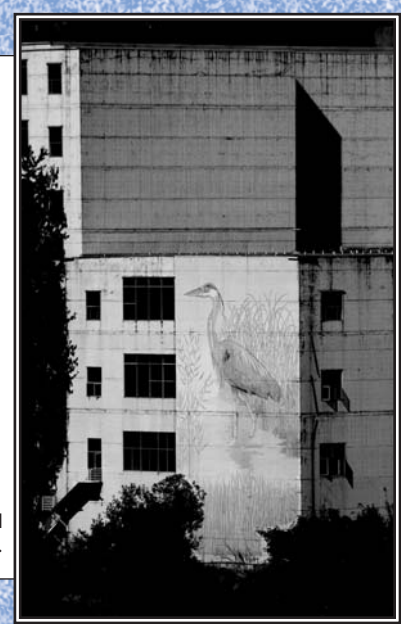


## Photo Contest Winners!

The winners of CLF's first ever "What Makes Your Community Great?" photo contest are Mike Houck, Matt Fisher, and Kasandra Griffin. Sandy Carter and Matthew Webber received honorable mentions.

View all the winning photos at [www.clfuture.org/publications/news/photowinnernews](http://www.clfuture.org/publications/news/photowinnernews).

Winning photo, Portland Memorial at Oaks Bottom, by Mike Houck.



## CLF welcomes our new members!

- African American Health Coalition
- Bike Gallery
- Community Development Student Group at Portland State University
- Dana L. Brown Consulting
- David Evans & Associates
- Ecotrust
- Environmental Justice Action Group
- Gales Creek Insurance
- Otak
- Portland General Electric
- Turtle Island Development LLC

Visit [www.clfuture.org](http://www.clfuture.org) to download past issues of *CONNECTIONS* and other CLF publications.



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Subscribers receive a weekly digest of action alerts and announcements from CLF member organizations. To subscribe, send your email address to:

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➤ **Stability and Success, continued from page 5.**

establishing community consensus for the strengthening of community schools as essential for the success of any housing community revitalization strategy.

The federally-funded HOPE VI redevelopment of the former Columbia Villa in North Portland, now New Columbia, includes 852 units of mixed-income rental and for-sale housing, and the New School, a joint project of Portland Public Schools, the Housing Authority of Portland, the Boys and Girls Clubs and Portland Parks and Recreation. The school will replace an aging but very high achieving PPS elementary school in a low-income community and will take advantage of co-location with the Boys and Girls Club to share gymnasium and community activity space. The shared cost of the project means that the school district pays about half of what it would have cost to build a new school. The Housing Authority of Portland made the land for the school's redevelopment available as part of the HOPE VI project, and will manage the finance and construction of the school. Once built, PPS will operate the school, which is expected to open its doors to an estimated 350-500 students from New Columbia and the surrounding community in the fall of 2006. The historic agreement between the school district and a community developer, in this case the Housing Authority of

Portland, should serve as model for multi-use facilities in other neighborhoods. Where school districts have school development or redevelopment programs, the opportunity exists to integrate multiple uses into those development plans. When school districts have excess or underutilized facilities or land, these sites could be redeveloped as mixed-use, including housing affordable to low-income families. Space for social service and community education can be programmed into the planning of the multi-use space and can house programs like the SUN Schools.

### School Districts Providing Affordable Housing

In markets where escalating real estate values "price out" existing low or moderate income families, or preclude first time homebuyers — often young families — from locating there, creation of specific incentives to retain and attract young families serves to preserve an economically diverse neighborhood and stem the trend of declining school enrollment. In the hot real estate market of Santa Clara, California the housing crisis became acute during the dot-com bubble years. Prices never really came down and the school district was losing teachers as fast as they were hired because they couldn't afford to live or raise families close to their jobs. That school district worked with a developer to build

affordable rentals on property the school district owned, and has now teamed up with local employer Intel to provide a mortgage assistance program offering five-year interest-free secondary mortgage loans. The first round of renters are now buying homes and the district regrets only that it did not develop more rental housing five years ago. The teacher-housing project is catching on in other hot market communities in California.

Each of these strategies approaches the issues of school enrollment, achievement and housing instability from a different point of view: employers interested in housing a qualified local workforce, communities stabilizing through redevelopment, and innovative approaches by school districts and community developers. But the goal of each is the same: to stabilize families, neighborhoods and communities by strengthening the connection between schools and housing. When housing is attractive and affordable, and schools are succeeding, as Richard Baron puts it, "Families can stay put, in a place they want to live; their lives are better, and a big part of that is that their children can stay in school, build relationships in the community, and learn." ✨

*Kate Allen is the Director of the Portland Office of the Enterprise Foundation. Enterprise Portland works with partners across the state and region to build affordable housing and move Oregon families up and out of poverty.*

## Invest responsibly in your future.

Value parks and green spaces? Like to ride or walk to work? Think everyone deserves a place to call home? Want your dollar to go further, as in generations ahead?

Then you belong with the Coalition for a Livable Future.

Over the last 10 years the Coalition has been advocating for smarter public policies, educating the public, and coordinating the efforts of over 70 different non-profits and businesses that make this a place you can be proud of; a place with safe routes to schools, nature in neighborhoods and homes that are affordable and accessible to transit.

When critical decisions are made about the development of the Portland metro area the Coalition serves as a unified voice for smart growth and good business.

Please join or renew your membership in CLF, and invest in the vision of a healthy region.

You can invest in your future and become an individual member of the Coalition with as little as \$40, \$75 or more. We'll keep you informed of our work with a subscription to this journal, special reports like our Regional Equity Atlas, discounts on special events, invitations to public forums on critical regional issues, and a subscription to our weekly electronic mail listserv, clinfo.

*Thank you for working with us to make our community even better.*

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African American Health Coalition  
 American Institute of Architects,  
 Portland Chapter  
 American Society of Landscape Architects  
 Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates  
 Audubon Society of Portland  
 Better People  
 Bicycle Transportation Alliance  
 Bike Gallery  
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 CITE, Creative Information Transformation  
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 Friends of Tryon Creek State Park  
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 Growing Gardens  
 Hillsdale Neighborhood Association

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Monthly giving is easy,  
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 the longevity of CLF's work.

Please use the enclosed  
 envelope to specify the amount  
 you would like CLF to charge to your  
 credit card each month.

Questions?  
 Call 503-294-2889.

## The Coalition for a Livable Future appreciates the continued support of our funders! We would like to thank and acknowledge:

Bullitt Foundation	Washington County Commissioner
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101/PGE Foundation	Investment Program Charitable Fund)
City of Beaverton	Ralph L. Smith Foundation
City of Lake Oswego	Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust
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## Sustainers Circle (These supporters gave \$500+)

Rex Burkholder and Lydia Rich	Tasha Harmon Julie Mancini	Amber Ontiveros Howard and Manya Shapiro
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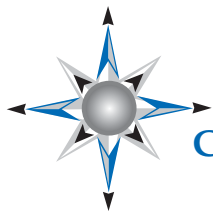
## We would like to thank our Monthly Supporters (These supporters give monthly via credit card)

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## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COALITION FOR A LIVABLE FUTURE

- 1 Protecting, maintaining and restoring the social and economic health of our urban, suburban, and rural communities, especially the distressed parts of the region;**
  - (a) Preventing displacement of low and moderate income residents and people of color as neighborhoods improve;
  - (b) Assuring easy and equitable access to employment and affordable housing throughout the region;
  - (c) Promoting the preservation and development of housing affordable to low and moderate income residents throughout the region;
  - (d) Protecting, maintaining and encouraging the development of living wage jobs, small businesses, and community-based and sustainable economic development throughout the region;
  - (e) Reversing the polarization of income and raising income and opportunities for the region's low-income residents;
  - (f) Preserving and enhancing a high quality public education system for all parts of the region and all residents;
  - (g) Encouraging the development of food production, processing, and distribution strategies that contribute to the local economy and ensure access by all community members to healthful and affordable foods within each neighborhood;
- 2 Developing a more sustainable relationship between human residents and the ecosystems of this region;**
  - (a) Reducing consumption (particularly of non-renewable resources), pollution, and waste;
  - (b) Changing the patterns of urban expansion from low-density suburban sprawl, which relies on the automobile and wastes valuable farm and forest lands and other natural resources, to more compact neighborhoods with a mix of uses conveniently served by public transportation;
  - (c) Expanding transportation options, including reducing dependency on automobiles and vehicle miles traveled per capita and increasing transit, bike and walking opportunities throughout the region;
  - (d) Protecting, restoring and maintaining healthy watersheds, fish and wildlife and their habitats, greenspaces, and other natural resources within and outside urban growth boundaries;
  - (e) Ensuring that the built and natural environment are integrated in a sustainable manner that supports neighborhood livability and protects wetlands, streams, water quality, air quality and the natural landscape and recognizes that both natural resources and humans are part of the urban ecosystem;
  - (f) Addressing past, present and future issues of environmental equity including: the siting and cleanup of polluting industries and waste disposal sites, remediation of toxic waste sites and water pollution, and the distribution of neighborhood parks, trails, and greenspaces;
  - (g) Encouraging the development of food production, processing, and distribution systems that regenerate and support natural systems and biodiversity, enrich neighborhood development patterns, and build community;
- 3 Assuring the fair distribution of tax burdens and government investment within the region;**
- 4 Promoting a diverse and tolerant society;**
- 5 Increasing public understanding of these regional growth management issues, developing effective democratic discourse, and promoting broader citizen participation in decision-making regarding growth in our region.**

### CLF member organizations:

Humanists of Greater Portland  
Jobs With Justice  
Johnson Creek Watershed Council  
The Justice and Peace Commission of  
St. Ignatius Catholic Church  
League of Women Voters of the  
Columbia River Region  
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Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives  
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REACH Community Development Corporation  
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Sisters of the Road Cafe  
Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program  
Sunnyside United Methodist Church  
Tualatin Riverkeepers  
Tualatin Valley Housing Partners  
Turtle Island Development, LLC  
Urban Greenspaces Institute  
The Urban League of Portland  
Urban Water Works  
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The Wetlands Conservancy  
Willamette Pedestrian Coalition  
Willamette Riverkeepers  
Woodlawn Neighborhood Association

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"Let us put our minds together  
and see what life we can make for our children."

— Chief Sitting Bull

*Please join us at CLF's 4th Annual Regional Livability Summit*

**April 11, 2006**

World Trade Center, 121 SW Salmon St., Portland, Oregon

Registration begins at 12:30 pm • Keynote address at 6:30 pm

**J**oin community leaders, advocates, planning professionals, elected officials, business leaders, agency staff, students and residents from throughout all parts of the region to:

- Learn new information about the current state of the Portland-Vancouver metro region and trends affecting our future;
- Participate in one of seven strategy sessions about the critical questions facing our region;
- Build new relationships and strengthen existing ones;
- Increase understanding of how your local work fits into a broader, regional context; and,
- Hear author and journalist Richard Louv speak about how the loss of greenspaces and nature is affecting our children.

Join us for the Summit,  
or just for Richard Louv's  
keynote address. Louv is  
the author of *Last Child in  
the Woods: Saving our Children  
from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

For more information,  
visit [www.clfuture.org](http://www.clfuture.org)



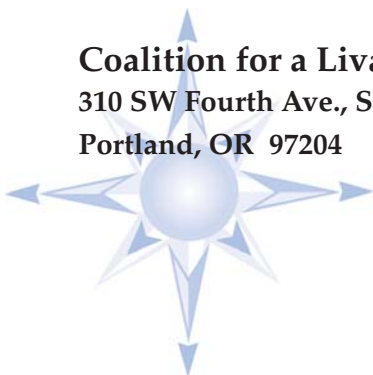
## *Our Mission*

The purpose of the Coalition for a Livable Future is to protect, restore, and maintain healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities, both human and natural, for the benefit of present and future residents of the greater metropolitan region.

**Coalition for a Livable Future**

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