

# Neighbors Step Up for Livability

## Taking action to improve Dekum

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FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Ross Danielson remembers when his wife, Annie, would arrive home upset after falling into deep pot-holes as she stepped off the Tri-Met bus on Northeast Dekum Street.

The holes that hid beneath overgrown grass were remnants of an unfinished thought of trees lining the street. Compounding those absentminded pitfalls was the trash and graffiti plaguing streets in their Woodlawn community.

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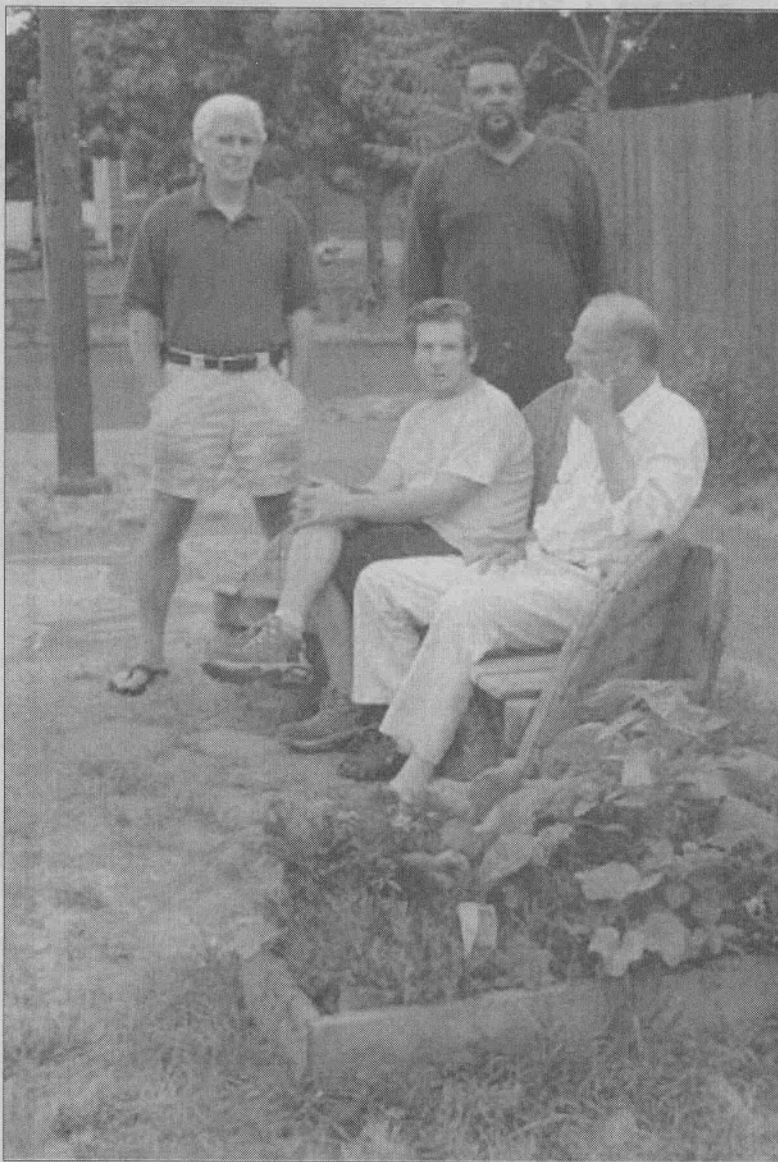
—Ross Danielson

Several other neighbors agreed that the disrespectful behavior made Dekum an unsafe and unsightly route for transit riders.

Danielson said when he approached the city of Portland and TriMet he was told there was no money or government help available to solve the neighborhood livability issues.

"The city wouldn't fill the holes or clean up the

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Ross Danielson (far right) takes a seat on a bus stop bench built by Matt Cartwright (second from right) for their neighborhood on Northeast Dekum Street in Portland's Woodlawn community. Also pictured are neighbors Zac Reisner (far left) and J.L. Quentin.

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*continued* ▲ *from Metro*

trash," he said.

Danielson's response was filling the holes himself, feeling it was not that big of a job, and building an alliance with other local residents to improve livability issues.

Most of the concerns were over the poor upkeep of public spaces on Dekum between Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd and Northeast 15th Avenue.

Some of the neighbors tried to keep up with the stray trash by collecting it themselves and took money from their own pockets to paint over the unfading graffiti near their homes. But they were overwhelmed in the process.

"Many of these empty patches of land between the street and sidewalks are the homeowners' concern, the city's concern, and Tri-Met's concern," Danielson said. "Since they are all semi-responsible, they are all semi-abandoned as well."

The neighbors and volunteers were soon united in a bus stop project targeting the main problematic area near the Dekum Triangle. The central concern was to create a safe and clean place for his neighbors and wife to wait for the bus.

Many volunteers donated their time, money, and materials to create and maintain a bus stop unique to the Woodlawn community.

"A variety of people have

helped," Danielson said, "From a homeless man to a couple kids heading to school."

The stop's central design includes a wooden bench constructed from a 200-pound donated industrial cable spool made by Matt Cartwright. Cartwright has been a volunteer for City Repair and other projects since 1999.

"I do it for the volunteer and art opportunities," he said.

Local artist and Woodlawn resident Christy Fish designed an adjacent red rose sidewalk mural, symbolic of Portland's most notorious flower.

The art was inspired by the desire to unite a diversified Woodlawn community.