

# SMILE ANNUAL REPORT

## FY 2021-22

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SMILE (Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League) is an *all-volunteer* neighborhood association representing Sellwood and Westmoreland. Neighbors elect a twelve member Board of Directors annually. SMILE volunteers act as a liaison between the City of Portland and Sellwood-Moreland, organize committees that actively address neighborhood issues and interests, and host numerous neighborhood events and activities. SMILE has a long history of working collaboratively with local organizations, businesses and government agencies.

Despite the challenges and limitations associated with COVID, SMILE had a highly productive year. We created and adopted a Values and Goals Statement to guide current and future Boards when making decisions, hosted two dozen free community events, held dozens of community meetings, established a Housing Solutions Committee to consider houselessness in our neighborhood, facilitated several discussions between architects and neighbors about proposed new developments, and received a \$250,000 grant to remodel the SMILE Station.

On the business side of SMILE, the emphasis has been on recovering from the long shut-downs and revenue losses associated with COVID. Fortunately, Oaks Pioneer Church is rebounding successfully and the SMILE Station is on its way.

# THE COMMUNITY SIDE OF SMILE

## MAJOR 2021-22 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Neighborhood Events - We Were Busy!

- SMILE hosted seven FREE outdoor summer concerts, featuring local musicians who have been hard hit by COVID. (An eighth concert was canceled due to blistering heat.) Several local businesses provided sponsorships and support. Concert promotions encouraged neighbors to patronize local food vendors and businesses.
- Sundae in the Park returned to Sellwood Park after a three year hiatus, thanks to collaboration between SMILE, Sellwood Community House and many other neighborhood businesses and organizations. This was a FREE event.
- Summerville was a multi-day event organized by SMILE, SMBA and the Sellwood Community House. It included a FREE Summer “Free for All” concert sponsored by the City of Portland, and loads of other activities around the neighborhood. Several local businesses provided sponsorships and support.
- SMILE and the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association co-hosted a Neighborhood Clean-up Day in Westmoreland Park.
- SMILE organized and hosted a neighborhood Open Mic event featuring neighborhood musicians anxious to show their chops. It was a blast!
- SMILE hosted a FREE Easter Egg Hunt in Oaks Amusement Park for neighborhood kids.
- The annual Christmas Tree lighting on SE 13th Avenue beautified the neighborhood.
- SMILE committees planned, organized and executed multiple stewardship events at Oaks Bottom Nature Preserve, Oaks Bottom Overlook and Springwater Meadows.
- A joyful Volunteer Appreciation celebration at the SMILE Station honored long-time and recent volunteers.

## **Community Meetings - SMILE hosted a wide variety of guests this past year**

- QFC Market managers - ongoing security concerns
- Portland Police Bureau officer - crime prevention and PPB policies
- Portland Water Bureau - waterline replacement project
- Bureau of Environmental Services - sewer extension project
- Portland Bureau of Transportation - parking issues
- Multnomah County Assessor - understanding the property tax system
- Masa Fresh - introducing a new community resource
- Seven architects - working on new development projects
- Non-profit organizations working with houseless neighbors including - Shelter Now, WeShine, and Hygiene 4 All
- Representative Karin Power - a constituent coffee
- Cascadia Action representative - clean air coordination

## **Governance - Staying relevant during COVID**

- The SMILE Board held a retreat and several follow-up meetings to better define a long-term organizational roadmap. As a result of those meetings, the Board adopted a SMILE Values and Goals Statement, which was widely disseminated through numerous communications channels.
- After extensive community outreach, an election for the SMILE Board was successfully executed with support from SE Uplift.
- The Finance Committee was reconstituted and a more collaborative, transparent budgeting process was implemented.
- In response to ongoing concerns about our houseless neighbors, a Housing Solutions Committee was created.

## **Communications - An ongoing challenge**

- New volunteers joined the Communications Committee. As a result, SMILE's social media presence was significantly improved, and a subscriber newsletter was expanded and enhanced. Currently nearly 1400 residents subscribe and the list continues to grow.
- A postcard with SMILE contact information was mailed to every neighborhood resident.
- Our free local newspaper, The Bee, provided monthly updates on SMILE activities to their 45,000 inner-SE readers.

## **SMILE COMMITTEES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY**

- **Land Use** - The Land Use Committee conducted extensive research and provided testimony about a proposed zoning change and potential environmental impacts on the Sellwood Bluff. Over 600 people signed a petition supporting SMILE's position. The committee hosted seven "Meet the Architect" meetings where committee members and neighbors discussed proposed new developments before plans were finalized.
- **Housing Solutions** - A new committee was created to address increasing concern about our houseless neighbors. The initial focus was on educating each other about processes, resources and community partnerships. Several guest speakers attended committee meetings in support of committee efforts.
- **Emergency Preparedness Committee/NET Teams** - Under the guidance of a retired firefighter/paramedic/SMILE Board member, neighborhood NET teams met regularly to prepare for emergencies large and small.
- **Stewardship of Natural Amenities (SNAC)** - SNAC planned, organized and executed multiple stewardship events at Oaks Bottom Overlook and Springwater Meadows. SNAC also worked with SOLV to staff multiple clean-up events at Oaks Bottom Nature Preserve.
- **Community Safety Committee** - Worked closely with Portland's Office of Civic Life and Police Bureaus on issues of community safety. The committee hosted several FREE sessions of "Neighbors Together Training" offered by the Office of Civic Life.
- **Transportation Committee** - Connected neighbors with information and resources to address common transportation concerns including parking, speeding and pedestrian safety.
- **Events Committee** - This group planned and executed the many neighborhood events sponsored by SMILE and its community partners.
- **Communications Committee** - This group managed SMILE's communications channels including a website, Facebook and Instagram pages, an e-newsletter, posters, flyers, banners, and more.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

SMILE works closely with local businesses, nonprofits and community groups. Our primary collaborators are:

### Sellwood Community House (SCH)

SMILE and SCH have a representative on each other's Board of Directors. SMILE contributed \$3000 to support SCH events, and donated Sundae in the Park proceeds for SCH scholarships. The two organizations co-hosted and/or collaborated in numerous events, shared physical space, materials and volunteer labor.

### Sellwood-Moreland Business Alliance (SMBA)

SMBA members struggled mightily during COVID as many small businesses shut down either temporarily or permanently. As a result, their ability to provide ongoing support to their members for events and promotions declined significantly. SMILE co-hosted several events with SMBA and promoted local businesses and SMBA efforts through our social media channels. In turn, many businesses promoted SMILE events and donated space, supplies and labor. A SMILE Board member regularly attended SMBA meetings.

### SE Uplift (SEUL)

SMILE maintained a seat on the SEUL Board of Directors and actively participated in meetings. SMILE enthusiastically participated in SEUL's Community Engagement on Houselessness. SEUL provided SMILE with meeting facilitation for a Board retreat, assisted with online elections, and provided technical assistance on topics such as insurance and educational opportunities. SEUL awarded SMILE a grant for a neighborhood-wide postcard mailing project.

### City of Portland

SMILE has continued to work closely and collaboratively with City staff on a wide range of issues and projects, including land use, transportation, public safety, construction, planning and natural resources. Thanks to assistance from Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty, SMILE applied for and was awarded a \$250,000 grant to remodel the SMILE Station.

## **THE BUSINESS SIDE OF SMILE**

Unlike other neighborhood associations, SMILE operates two commercial properties as rentals. The properties are managed by a part-time Director of Operations, who reports to the SMILE Board, and several hourly employees who provide customer service. Any net revenue realized from these rentals is used to fund the activities outlined in this report.

### **BUSINESS OPERATIONS MILESTONES**

- SMILE applied for and received a \$250,000 grant from the City of Portland for badly needed repairs and remodeling at the SMILE Station.
- An architectural firm has been engaged to recommend affordable remodeling options that will best benefit the neighborhood.
- SMILE met with the Energy Trust of Oregon to identify energy efficiency upgrades at the SMILE Station and Oaks Pioneer Church.
- Oaks Pioneer Church was painted, windows and handrails were repaired and landscaping was improved.
- New wedding packages introduced at Oaks Pioneer Church have proven to be very popular.
- Both the SMILE Station and Oaks Pioneer church rentals are showing signs of recovering from COVID shut-downs.
- After decades of hoping, dreaming and planning, the transfer of the Helen Hiczen trust fund, totalling approximately \$800,000, was transferred from SMILE to the Sellwood Community House. This money provided SCH with the capital it needed to take over the operation of SCH from Portland Parks, which planned to close the facility. This was a dream come true for the entire neighborhood. Hurray!

### **FINANCES**

COVID, plus several major unanticipated infrastructure repairs at the SMILE Station and Oaks Pioneer Church, forced SMILE to operate at a deficit for the past two years. Thankfully due to careful fiscal management over the years, we had sufficient funds available to pay the bills. To address future unanticipated expenses like the ones we've recently experienced, the Board adopted a policy to hold \$70,000 in reserve for future unbudgeted operating and maintenance expenses. This should provide financial stability if/when disaster strikes once again.

SMILE's revenue is steadily recovering from COVID shut-downs while we're also actively seeking opportunities to reduce expenses. Once the SMILE Station remodel is completed later this year, we are confident that we will once again be operating in the black.

## **SMILE STATION**

The century-old SMILE Station, which is owned by SMILE, hosts community meetings and events, and rents space for parties, business meetings and classes. It has been over 30 years since SMILE took possession of the building and completed extensive renovations, and the 100 year old building is showing its age. This past year black mold was discovered in the basement which required staff offices to be vacated, records to be relocated and extensive (expensive) remediation work to be performed. The roof started leaking beyond repair, resulting in a new (expensive) roof and gutters. And a rodent infestation in the attic was discovered which required immediate (expensive) remediation by a professional pest control company. That's the bad news.

The good news is that, thanks to Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty, SMILE applied for and received a \$250,000 grant from the City of Portland to rehabilitate the SMILE Station! The grant allows us to reimburse ourselves for the roof work, to remodel the basement, paint the exterior of the building, and (hopefully) make some significant energy upgrades. SMILE has engaged an architectural firm to explore our remodeling options and consulted with the Energy Trust of Oregon on affordable energy efficiency upgrades. Construction will happen as soon as plans are in place, permits pulled and contractors employed. Our hope is to restore the old building so it continues as an affordable neighborhood resource for another thirty years and beyond.

## **OAKS PIONEER CHURCH**

Oaks Pioneer Church is a beloved neighborhood landmark that SMILE has lovingly maintained for decades with help from dedicated volunteers and local vendors. The vintage church, which is owned by the City of Portland but operated by SMILE, is rented primarily for weddings, but is also used for memorials, concerts and photo shoots. SMILE is responsible for the vast majority of maintenance on both the building and the grounds. Any net rental proceeds are used to support the community activities and events outlined in this report.

SMILE's contract with Portland Parks and Recreation expires soon and will need to be renegotiated. The future of SMILE's operation and stewardship of the church will depend on the outcome of those negotiations.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The past several years have taught us a few lessons. The most obvious is that life can change on a moment's notice, that old buildings are expensive to maintain, and that we need to better prepare for an uncertain future. Another is that the neighborhood is evolving with a rapid influx of new residents with different backgrounds and ages, and that we must expand our efforts to reach as many residents as possible. Some specific SMILE goals are to:

- Carefully manage the SMILE Station remodel grant to maximize its benefit for this precious neighborhood asset.
- Prioritize our limited resources for activities consistent with SMILE's adopted Values and Goals Statement.
- Continue seeking ways to recruit and effectively communicate with a wider range of Sellwood-Moreland neighbors.
- Continue efforts to streamline and modernize our business practices.

Accomplishing these goals will take the time, effort and thoughtful engagement of many neighborhood volunteers – a handful of people cannot do it alone. Please consider becoming active in SMILE this next year. Working together we can make great progress!