SUNNYSIDE Neighborhood News

January 2026

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org board@sunnysideportland.org

News from the President

By Chris Waldmann, SNA President

Happy New Year Neighbors! I hope you had an amazing holiday season and are ready for an amazing 2026 in Sunnyside, Portland and hopefully, a better year for the country writ large.

In December, the SNA hosted a special General Meeting to discuss traffic safety issues on some of our neighborhood corridors, particularly César E. Chavez Blvd and 30th Avenue. This was prompted by the tragic accident that took the life of Richmond resident, Grey Wolfe, as she was out for her daily walk up to Mt. Tabor. We had representatives from the PBOT office of Vision Zero, which has been seeking to eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries for over a decade (with mixed results), a senior PBOT traffic engineer, who is also a Sunnyside resident and parent of SES students, as well as Councilmember Morillo and representatives from Council VP Tiffany Koyama Lane's office.

We learned about how Chavez Blvd is one of the city's designated High Crash Corridors, which despite encompassing only 8% of Portland roads, account for 67% of traffic-related deaths. These corridors are a priority for the agency, but as we know, infrastructure change comes slowly. Work will soon begin on the southern end of the four-lane section of Chavez between Powell and Holgate, but unfortunately, work on the northern section, starting at NE Sandy Blvd is still a long way, and many budget dollars, away. But, there is some good news for advocates of safety on Chavez coming soon. PBOT is planning to use its emergency authority to lower the speed limit on Chavez from 30 to 25 and to add two radar signs that will help drivers realize how fast they may be driving through our neighborhood. This is not the panacea of putting this road on a diet by eliminating general travel lanes and improving the atrocious sidewalk situation, but hopefully it will save lives, as reductions in speed directly correlate to lower crash fatalities.

On the west end of the neighborhood, SE 30th has seen some recent "improvements" that we don't believe are helping too much with safety at a major crossing for the Salmon St. Greenway. PBOT added "speed cushions", which include cutouts to allow emergency vehicles to pass unimpeded, and freshly painted crosswalks. Unfortunately, the speed cushions do not seem to be having the desired effect. Drivers are easily able to use the gaps to pass through without slowing down a bit and if they do hit the bumps, the angle of the hill appears to make the bump less effective as drivers approach the intersection. Also, these changes do not protect pedestrians crossing at Main and Taylor, which are both downhill from Salmon, meaning they have very limited visibility into oncoming traffic that is cresting. Spurred by neighbors on this issue, the SNA Board agreed to sign on to a letter to PBOT seeking remediations to this project and further monitoring to ensure the changes are effective. Area neighbors are seeking help for purchasing crossing flags to aid pedestrian safety, particularly for the many school children who use this route. You can contribute at gofundme.com/f/keep-se-30th-and-salmon-safe-for-pedestrians.

Also traffic-related, the Board named a new chair for our Land Use & Transportation Committee (LUTC). Connor Lirot is a new Board member this year and lives just off of another of our corridors–Belmont. He has a passion for traffic and land use issues and has the mandate to examine a wide swath of the issues affecting the neighborhood.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for an announcement about LUTC's meeting schedule and upcoming agendas. You can reach out to the committee with issues at lutc@sunnysideportland.org.

That's it for now. As I write this, we are still planning our regular January General Meeting; keep those ideas and concerns coming to us at sunnysideboard@googlegroups.com and on our Facebook page.

Wishing you peace and joy in 2026.

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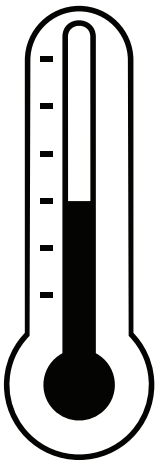

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Raised: $1000

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Or email: *newsletter@sunnysideportland.org* to purchase advertising space in future issues.

SNA Newsletter Needs Your Help

As you read in previous issues, our newsletter printing costs have increased 33% overnight. This newsletter is entirely volunteer-produced–from local writers such as Erika Bolstad, Lydia Kiesling, Alex Frane, Mike Thelin, and Jordan Michelman to a volunteer copyeditor, volunteer designer and volunteer Treasurer. Sponsorship ads defray costs but don't entirely cover them. That's why we're asking for your support. Speaking of ads, a HUGE thank you to the local businesses that sponsor an ad.

In the last six weeks, we have received just under $1000–about 50% of our goal. Thank you SO much to those who have given! We're halfway there but we still have a ways to go to meet our goal. Do you like keeping up with all the neighborhood projects the SNA Board is engaged in—projects such as the 37th Street Plaza, the repainting of the City Repair Sunflower on 33rd, and the Sunnyside Shower Project? If so, please consider supporting this newsletter. Even a small donation of $10–20 a year would help us keep going. Without your donations we will have to either go to every-other-month, or possibly abandon the newsletter completely.

Donations can be made via Give Lively (tinyurl.com/395trwzw) or by check to SEUL 3534 SE Main St, Portland OR 97214, made out to The Sunnyside Neighborhood Association. Thank you in advance for considering.

Getting to Know your Neighbors

By Elizabeth Miller, Member-at-large

Q&A with Judi Brandel, Sunnyside resident for 60+ years

From my back window, I can see the backyard of the house Judi Brandel grew up in with her parents and older sister. She moved out of her parent's house in the late 1960s, but returned to Sunnyside as a homeowner and mother in 1980, just a couple of blocks away from her childhood home. Brandel is a retired photography and art history teacher who learned to play the accordion from YouTube. As one of Sunnyside's longtime residents, she's seen a lot change in this neighborhood.

Conversation has been edited for time and clarity.

How long have you lived in the Sunnyside neighborhood?

Judi: When I was born, we lived over on Washington, between 34th and 35th, in a little house and it's still there. There's another one just like it up on Salmon. My uncle owned that house and the one on Washington and rented it for $60.

Then my parents found the house on Taylor; it had been empty and it was all overgrown. But, that house had really good bones. It was really well built. I remember it cost $6,500 in 1960 and so we moved in with a trailer on the car. I rode in the trailer, and we did all these trips between that house and this house, and I got my own bedroom. It was so exciting.

I moved out of my parents' house in 1969, and we moved into this house in 1980. I was still in Portland, but I wasn't living here. Portland, 75 years, but Sunnyside, 64 years.

What would you say was your earliest memory of living in Sunnyside?

Judi: I have memories of kindergarten. I really liked my kindergarten teacher. We had full day kindergarten, so we took naps, did the whole thing—I have a vague memory of going home for lunch. So my earliest memory of this neighborhood would have been that, 'cause I remember going to the school and it was the same as it is now.

So you went to Sunnyside [School], and I heard your kids went to Sunnyside.

Judi: My sister and I both went to K-8 there. Then we went to Washington [High School, which is now Revolution Hall] and my daughter went there as well. Our mother was the cook at Sunnyside. She started substituting and then she got the job as head cook. When I had our daughter, I would go in there and get lunch sometimes if I was out somewhere. And then our granddaughter went there too.

What is your favorite thing about Sunnyside as a neighborhood?

Judi: It's so centrally located. Growing up, when I lived on Washington, all summer long we'd go to the kids' park at Laurelhurst.

Up on Belmont, the grocery store, the barber shop, the hardware store, the dime store and all the things were right there. I was always able to walk. Living in this neighborhood, for me, there's always been such great access, to this day. I like that I can leave my house and pretty much walk anywhere I need to go.

You know where Stumptown is? There's Stumptown, and then right next to Stumptown is the bar [Aalto Lounge]. That entire space was the Grocerteria, and that's where we went shopping when I was a kid. Then you could walk through it, and where Tantrum is, was the butcher shop.

Tell me a little bit about how you've seen the neighborhood change.

Judi: When I was first living here, my mom was pretty fearful. She was a fearful person. When we first lived here, it was my first exposure to people that were weird and creepy. There were definitely strange people and strange situations.

When we moved in in 1980, there was an arsonist going around this neighborhood. Families were leaving, and Sunnyside was having trouble. People were sending their kids to different schools. I don't know what happened. It just kind of bottomed out. And then the environmental school moved in and all of a sudden everybody wanted

Judi (bottom row, middle) and her Sunnyside kindergarten class.

A tintype photo of Judi from her teaching days.

to live in this neighborhood and all the families came back and now it's amazing, I mean, all these young families and all the kids. It's so fun watching them go to school, and the bike bus!

What could be improved in Sunnyside?

Judi: Parking, and that's true for Portland in general. Portland always feels like it's a day late and a dollar short. You know, it's like all of a sudden it goes, 'Oh, maybe we shouldn't have built all those big apartment buildings next to the neighborhoods where there's no street parking.' My mom used to get so outraged when someone would park in front of her house and I'd say, "Well, mom, it's a public street." But I'm the same way. Like, people, come on, can you at least park well?"

What is your favorite place in Sunnyside?

Judi: I love the library, I can't wait for it to come back. As a kid growing up, that was one of my favorite places to go. I read every single Beverly Cleary book. I read all the Nancy Drew books. I went there and checked books out all the time. When I was big enough to go by myself, I went and did my homework there. I loved that library and I still do. I feel so lucky to have it–that it's one of the old libraries and they're keeping that part of it and that it's still so close.

News From Sunnyside Environmental School (SES)

By Sarah Centerwall
Member-at-large and SES parent

Happy New Year to the Sunnyside Neighborhood! Thank you for all of your support and for showing up for Sunnyside Environmental School (SES) in 2025. We hope you have enjoyed all of the wonderful things happening at our school. There are so many fun events and activities to look forward to in the new year. We hope to see you there!

2nd–5th Grade Original Musical

Every year Mo Philips teaches an after-school program in musical production. The students get together with Mo in December and brainstorm a plan for an original musical each year. Together, they decide on the setting, characters, and plot. Mo wraps it up into an amazing creation that will dazzle us all. In January, students in grades 2–5 will begin preparing and practicing for the show. Middle school students help with stage managing, set building, costume making, and tech. Stay tuned for more information including show dates and times. The performances will take place around the middle of March.

Dine Out at Laughing Planet

After the holiday mayhem, you may want a break from cooking but still opt for a healthy meal. You can do both at once and also raise money for SES by eating out at Laughing Planet on Belmont on January 28th. 10% of sales will be donated to SES. This quirky Mexican-inspired restaurant prides itself on using local ingredients and global flavors. So grab a burrito, smoothie, or a healthy bowl of your choice and enjoy.

Riparian Festival

Mark your calendar! The yearly beloved Riparian festival will be on January 22nd from 5:30–7:30 p.m. This is a Sunnyside tradition where students in grades 3–8 demonstrate everything they have learned throughout the year thus far through mixed media. For grades 3–5 you will see storylines, writing and artwork. For grades 6–8 you will find projects based on each class's thematic year (forest, river, mountain or ocean). Their classrooms turn into a demonstration hall with installations, dioramas, art projects, essays, handmade original games, presentations, demonstrations, and much more. There will be a lasagne dinner ($5 donation requested) and sweet treats. The evening will end with an all-school singalong in the auditorium. This one is not to be missed!

Gala Auction

Preparations and planning for the yearly Gala Auction are beginning. Do you have a local business? Are you an artist? Do you want to donate an auction item for the Gala? If you do, please contact Jessica at jessicamaeder@gmail.com. Each year this event raises much-needed funds for the school. It is always a fun-filled event for the community. I wonder what this year's theme will be. I'll let you all know once the cat is out of the bag.

Outdoor learning space updates

Stop by the playground and check out the developments on the outdoor learning space as it continues to evolve and come to life. In January the roof will be installed, the floor will be filled with gravel and the wood will be stained. SES middle school students are currently working on garden designs that will be built and installed in the spring. They are also working on bee and flower art because the theme is—you guessed it—BEES!

Have questions about SES? Email sunnysideenvironmentalnews@gmail.com and maybe I'll answer them in a future column!

Upcoming Meetings

Location details and agendas are on Sunnysideportland.org.

January

Jan 14th: General Meeting
and SNA Board Meeting, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

The Sunnyside Neighborhood News is published monthly by the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association.

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Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing newsletter@sunnysideportland.org. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior.** Many wonderful volunteer Sunnyside residents distribute the Neighborhood News.

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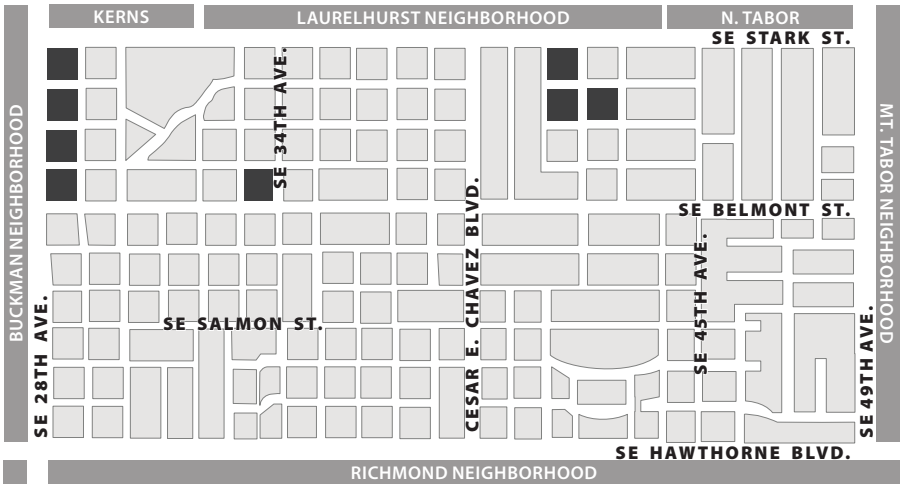

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