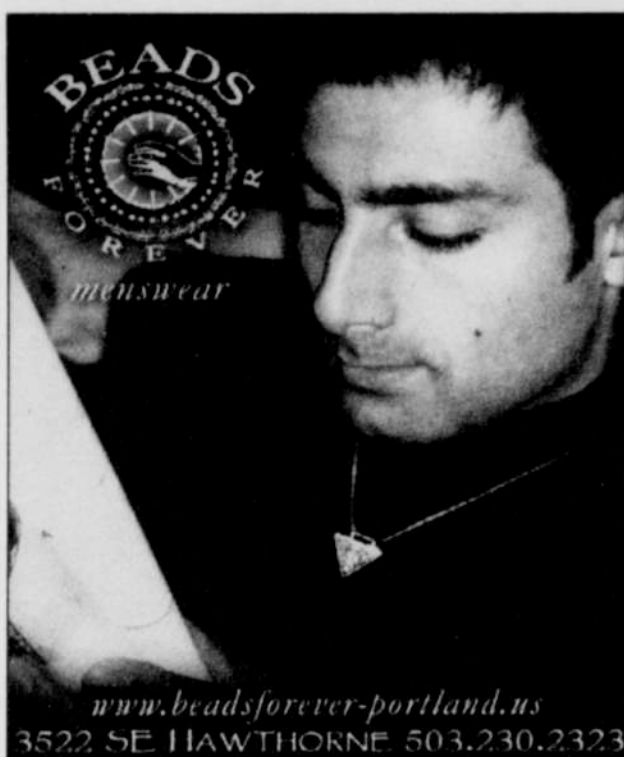


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NORTHWEST news

A PLACE TO CALL HOMO

Q Center gains momentum at Pride

by Jaymee R. Cuti

The Q Center, a temporary moniker, has set an ambitious goal. Planners expect the queer-specific community center will be up and running by Portland Pride '06.

"That's the goal," agreed City Commissioner Sam Adams and recently announced interim director Susan Remmers, an experienced advocate in the nonprofit sector.

Adams and Remmers held a public meeting this month to strategize revenue-raising opportunities at this year's Pride event to create Portland's first GLBTQ community center. Pride

modest building with four walls and a meeting room or a million-dollar, first-rate facility with a fitness center, entertainment venue, offices for health services and relevant resources, a cafe, a library, public art and workshop classrooms.

Although Adams could not commit city money to the project, he remains optimistic about funds, reminding meeting attendees that office rentals could generate income.

"We will have to make a case at Pride among people who can give us money," said Adams. "And to overcome skepticism because of previous attempts that never came to fruition."



Django Records in downtown Portland is one of many potential locations for the Q Center.

has become a touchstone to measure progress with the project. Approximately 1,600 community members ranked the need for a community center for sexual minorities in "Out with It" surveys conducted at Pride in 2003.

To meet the mark, volunteers are launching two large-scale fund-raising parties at Pride and gaining visibility by marching in the parade and staffing a booth at the festival.

"If you want the center, you're going to have to make it happen," said Remmers, part cheerleader, part taskmaster. "Along the way, there will be ample opportunity to do some real work."

The two events expected to raise "seed money" for the Q Center are the Portland Pride Warehouse Block Party and auction, hosted by local celebrity Poison Waters on June 18, and the Taking Pride in Stark Block Party, featuring DJs and world-class performers June 19. The block party alone is expected to raise between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

Remmers' priority, immediately following Pride, is to assemble a board and a founder's circle, which will develop a business plan and guide site selection, grant solicitation and naming the community center.

The board is also charged with the task of deciding whether the center will begin as a

Skepticism surrounding the center's opening date may also persist because a location has not been cemented. "Encourage anyone who owns a building to come forward," Remmers half-joked.

Project volunteers have conducted seven site tours but count the locale scouting expeditions to date as practice. A few potential locations included the former Jantzen Swimwear headquarters on Northeast 19th Avenue and Sandy Boulevard, the Chevrolet car dealership on Northeast 16th Avenue and Sandy Boulevard, an Old Town site on Northwest Fourth Avenue and Flanders Street, and Django Records on Southwest 11th Avenue and Stark Street.

"We were learning to ask questions," said Adams. "Each site had its strengths."

He said the group has not discussed which locations had the most potential.

Through the 2003 surveys, both the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community and organizational leaders agreed on gaps they desire the center to fill. In surveys, individuals and leaders asked that the Q Center provide services and activities for youth, seniors and families, with programs dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention and testing, community celebration opportunities and a strong presence of art and culture. **jrc**