

Home

by Abraham Vinzant

Some people think it's their castle.
Some people think it's a place to hang their hat.
Some others think it's just four walls and a roof.
I think it's a palace.

The Almost Spring Like Poem

By Kareem Ali

There is a leap of clearing
Between those hills,
Those hills where spring daffodils
Continually bloom,
And there,
A countenance of clarity
Rises from the trees
Like a long ham
Lingering toward shore
And there,
Caught between shelter and shade,
A flock of tardy winter birds
Rises into a ledge of light
Ascending to where
Railroad rails collar themselves.
From there they soar
Into the tree soaked mountains
Resting only to watch
Spring badgers
Praying in the dark.

The billionaire dollar question: Who should benefit most from the PDC?

In 1999, North and Northeast Portland were low-income neighborhood surrounded by a food desert and The Portland Development Commission (PDC) promised to do something about it.

Fourteen years later, the PDC did – but many of the people who had needed the support were already involuntarily displaced by gentrification.



Cameron Whitten

Cameron is a social justice advocate in the Portland community.

The PDC spent \$2 million dollars to acquire a parcel of land on Northeast Alberta Street and MLK Boulevard a decade ago. On Nov. 14, the agency signed a deal to sell the public property for \$500,000 to Majestic Realty Company, led by one of America's richest families, to be

developed for a national grocery chain.

This decision sparked protest for a variety reasons: the site is no longer a food desert, while less affluent areas like East Portland still go underserved; the subsidy jeopardizes the profits of a nearby Safeway and small local grocers; the public process was tarnished by secretive aspects of the deal; and the high concentration of urban development will exacerbate the ongoing gentrification of the Albina community.

Portland ranks as one of the 10 fastest gentrifying cities in America, according to a study by the Cleveland Federal Reserve. Although North Portland leads the Metro region in affordable housing stock, there are indicators that low-income residents are

losing access to housing choice. According to The Oregonian's "Locked Out" series, Section 8 voucher holders in Zip Code 97211, which includes this lot, has dropped by 50 percent since 2001.

It's possible for anti-displacement efforts to protect renters from the effects of gentrification, but that's not what the PDC has proposed to do so far. The PDC is very articulate about how subsidizing the development of a national grocery chain will benefit a number of locally owned businesses. However, this multi-million dollar deal will ripple throughout the community in other ways, too. If history repeats itself, it will draw the attention of private developers and real estate professionals looking to make a quick profit, while low-income residents are sure to lose access.

The King Neighborhood Plan, adopted in 1993, set a vision for "mixed-use development along major arterials and activity nodes" and "incentives and subsidies that assure the continued presence of housing for lower-income households." This vision for an inclusive, diverse neighborhood is crucial to how the PDC moves forward with this project.

The proposed layout is for a single-story building that the PDC hopes will anchor small businesses in the area. But how can we maximize our resources to also anchor low income families who want to remain a part of the community?

If the PDC is going to subsidize the assets of Majestic Realty Company, it should leverage its development agreements to promote and encourage the integrity of an economically and racially diverse community.

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