

# Economic development brings community ownership

by Fritz Silber  
Pacific News Service

**BERKELEY, CA**—An unusual experiment in neighborhood self-determination is underway in this San Francisco Bay city known for its orthodox ways. The outcome may provide one answer to wrenching changes besetting many other American communities today.

The "laboratory" is the 3100 block of Shattuck Avenue, a major thoroughfare near the Oakland bor-

der. The goal is to protect the neighborhood's ethnic diversity and its own cherished sense of community. What threatens are commercial development and "gentrification"—processes that often drive property prices up and longtime residents out.

The 3100 block is something special here, a contentedly "mixed" neighborhood in an area where whites, Hispanics and blacks are more often found in separate enclaves. Three blocks north, a small

but fashionable shopping center is rising, of the type that provokes some anxiety over pressure on real estate values, and the future health of modest local enterprises.

"Neighborhood improvement is a desirable goal, but you have to ask for whom you're improving it," says Dale Becknell. And that's where Becknell's organization, the Northern California Land Trust (NCLT), comes in. Under its Model Alternatives for Peace program, the NCLT has made a down payment of \$43,000 to buy a commercial building on the Shattuck block. Working with a neighborhood association, it is establishing a rental and use plan to make the block an attractive long-term base for small businesses and local groups.

Community land trusts such as the NCLT, Becknell explains, offer non-profit alternatives to the usual cycle of neighborhood deterioration followed by speculation and dis-

placement of people and businesses serving local needs.

The building is the third of four commercial structures on the block to be bought by community groups. Two are occupied by La Pena and the Starry Plough, the former a Latin American bar, restaurant and cultural center, the latter an Irish bar catering to poets and musicians.

While the NCLT holds title to the newly purchased building, the neighborhood group will supervise its use and assure access for minority enterprises: Renewable leases at below-market rents provide long-term security. Current tenants include the NCLT itself, a half-dozen other community organizations, a printing and publishing firm, an attorney, and a liquor store; three additional community groups have expressed interest in renting space.

Ahmad Hakim, a printer who is setting up shop in the building, was searching desperately for a location

after moving his family from Los Angeles.

"I don't think we could have gotten into a place like this without the land trust bending over backward," he says. "We see great possibilities here. People in the area give us inspiration and let us know that we're going to serve a purpose."

Adds Mary Carleton, who made a loan for the building purchase: "I was looking for an alternative place to put my money, because with the banks I either didn't know what their lending policies were or I didn't agree with them. I want to help create non-profit, neighborhood-run ownership for buildings."

Glen Schneider, a gardener, landscaper, and a neighborhood association founder, declares that "a big factor is increased security, not having to worry about an unexpected rent increase if the building is sold. Another is more control and a sense of stewardship. It will stabilize the

block, help develop a feeling of community."

In time, Becknell said, the neighborhood group might establish a development corporation which could buy the building while leaving the land in trust with the NCLT. Such an arrangement could provide tax incentives for future investment and enable the NCLT to recapture and recycle funds originally assigned to the project.

"There is a conscious effort to deal with more than one aspect of the community—for example, linking land ownership, economic development, and democratic community self-management," said Bob Fabian, a neighborhood activist in economic development and energy planning, and a founder of the community organization. "Our organizers are attempting to relate the project to broader, longterm change."

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Congressman Ron Wyden participates in announcement of Portland Community College's planned small business incubator program on the Cascade Campus. (Photo: Richard Brown)

## Project aids small business

Portland Community College's Cascade Campus will be the site of a new small business incubator program to help new businesses in North/Northeast Portland. The project, which will be administered by the Cascade Business Center Corporation, (CBCC), is intended to foster the development of viable small businesses. Priority will be given to minority- and female-owned businesses.

A building will be constructed at a cost of \$3.76 million, \$1.295 million of which will be provided by PCC. The college is soliciting the remainder from private corporations, foundations and the federal government. Of the 60,000 square feet, two-thirds will be available to house the small businesses and the remainder for PCC's high tech training program.

PCC president Dr. John Anthony said the project is designed to house from 15 to 18 businesses, with light manufacturing, high tech and services given priority. Rent will be provided at less than the prevailing rate and business will share such ser-

vices as accounting, janitorial, secretarial, legal, reception, etc., at below market cost. Also available will be the college's computer technology and laboratory resources, banking assistance from local banks, PCC's business course and, if federal funds can be obtained, training for employees. The businesses, which can remain in the program for three years or less, must sign "first source agreements," agreeing to hire entry level persons through the City's CETA program. Inner Northeast residents will be given priority.

Carl Piacentini of the PCC Board of Directors, called the program "a unique public and private partnership of resources and funding" to create new jobs in an economically disadvantaged area.

Congressman Ron Wyden said this was the type of innovative program that is needed in "an area ravaged by unemployment and business failures" and could become a model for and an incentive for needed changes in the Small Business Administration's legislation.

## Bethel AME honors citizens

Bethel AME Church will recognize individuals whose actions have answered the question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Community Service Recognition Day will be January 16th at 7 p.m., according to Reverend Matthew A. Watley, pas-

tor. Recipients are: Clara Mae Peoples, Paul Knauls, James Loving, S.Q. Broadous, Charles Jordan, Charles Ganter, Cal R. Williams, Gladys and Bill McCoy.

The church is located at 5828 N.E. 8th Avenue.

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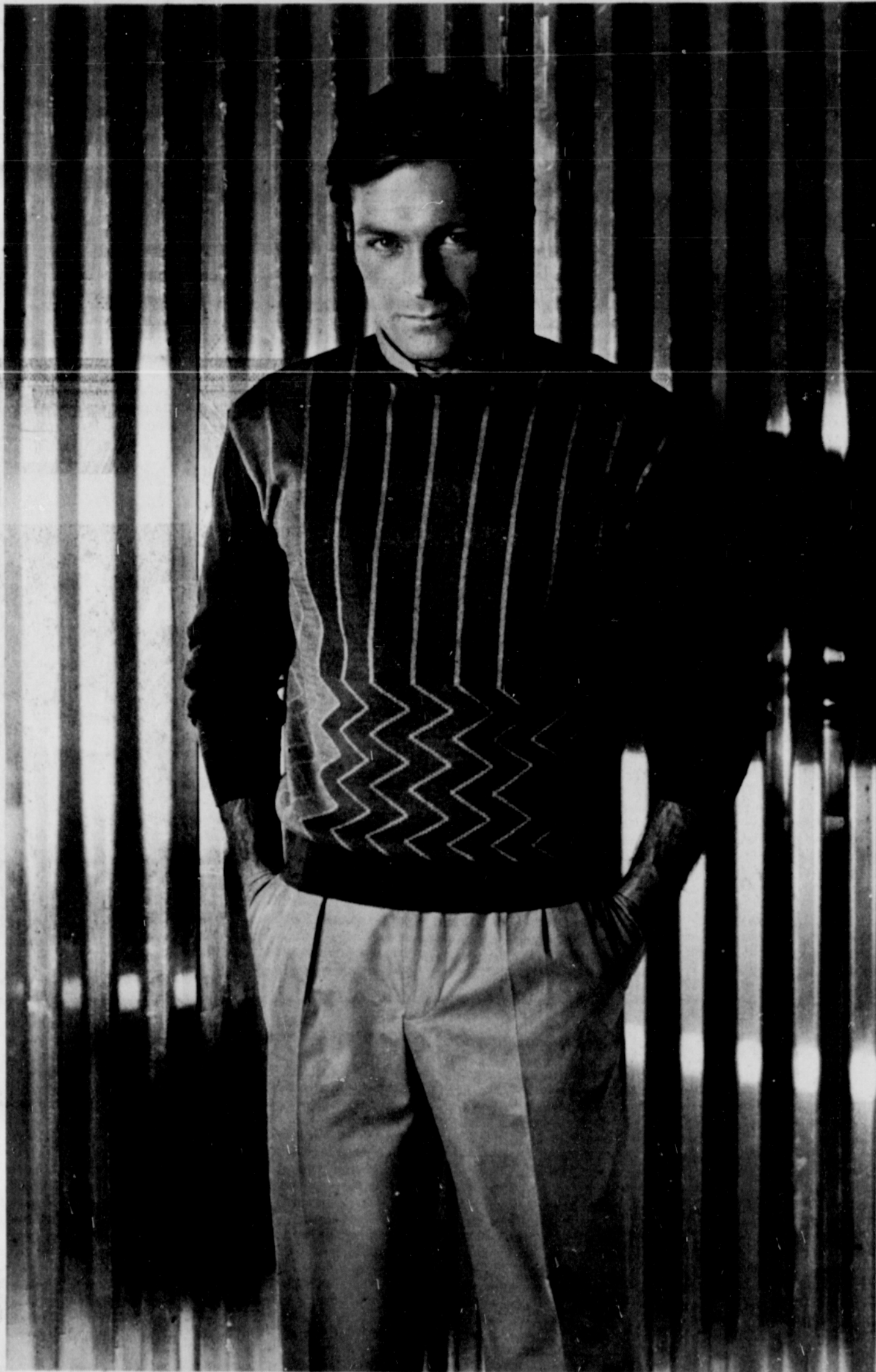
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