



Northeast Portland: PDC target

by Chuck Goodmacher

"I don't see that much progress related to minority business," is O.B. Hill's view of the Portland development Commission's progress on the "Economic Development Program for the Northeast Target Area." Hill's perception stems from his work as Chair of the Northeast Economic Development Task Force (NEED) and stands in stark contrast to that of the Portland Development Commission (PDC). "We have made quite a bit of progress," said Warner Wong, PDC's Northeast Area Project Coordinator.

The City Council approved the current "Economic Development Program for the Northeast Target Area," in March of 1982 to cap years of study and very little actual improvement in inner Northeast. According to Steve Peterson, Economic Development Coordinator for PDC (the City's official development agency), the document wasn't intended to be another in a long list of plans. Rather, said Peterson, it was "to provide a broad framework for City action."

The broad framework put forth in the Economic Development Program included many different elements including five key objectives and nine specific actions as well as a budget. This week, the *Portland Observer* reviews PDC action in the "Target Area" on a point-by-point basis. Community response to these actions and/or lack of action will be discussed in next week's *Observer*.

The "Program's" five objectives were developed to focus City activities in the area, according to Peterson. Specific actions are to be updated in annual action plans based on those five objectives which remain basically the same until they are reached, continued Peterson. As stated in the Program, the objectives are:

- "To provide employment opportunities within the Target Area for local residents, and to improve residents' access to employment opportunities within the Portland labor market.

- "To attract and expand light industry to serve as a base for the area's employment and income, and to stimulate additional business activity in the area."

vity in the area.

- To strengthen existing neighborhood retail and commercial business, and to attract regional firms.

- To improve the area's livability and promote a positive outlook for its future as a place to live and do business.

- To support small- and minority-owned business development and expansion."

Evidence provided to the *Observer* shows limited progress toward these goals. The greatest claim PDC makes for the success of its programs is the provision of loans for businesses locating in the Target Area—many of them non-minority. Both Wong and Peterson claim funding specific projects is the best effort PDC can put forward given a lack of consensus within the Northeast community regarding major developments.

PDC claims to have created 167 jobs and retained 155 through financing provided seventeen businesses in Northeast since 1980. PDC investments of \$1,494,883 generated private investments of \$4,717,117, according to a fact sheet provided by Wong. The assistance has been in the form of loans provided through two programs: the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund and the Industrial Site Development Revolving Loan Fund.

Loans from the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund are funded with an initial \$1.625 million grant from the Federal Economic Development Administration and are officially channeled through a non-profit corporation, the City Loan Corporation. PDC sets aside one-third of the funds available city-wide through this program for Northeast. To qualify, the business must be located in the Portland city limits, and in addition, be one or more of the following:

- A minority-owned business;
- A business being relocated by a public-sponsored improvement; or
- A business that is willing to sign a First Source Agreement.

Peterson says there is currently "more demand for loans than the availability of funds." Loan demand is particularly strong in Northeast according to Peterson. PDC's budget request for Fiscal Year 1984-85 calls for \$300,000 to

be made available.

The Industrial Site Development Revolving Loan Fund is another city-wide program being used by a few Northeast businesses. This fund provides money for assisting development of industrial sites and vacant buildings. One-third of this program is designated for Northeast and one-third for the Central East-side Industrial District. There are no criteria favoring minority businesses for this program.

The Economic Development Program does call for one loan program especially for minority businesses. Although PDC staff will present a proposal to the Commissioners February 8th, no such program has been implemented. \$50,000, allocated for this program in 1982, is still sitting in the bank.

The Northeast Program budget contains \$150,000 for land banking—none of which has been used or is currently designated. Those funds will revert to the City General Fund for disposal by the City Council in July if they are not used, stated Peterson.

According to Wong, PDC is currently in the process of computerizing an inventory of available commercial and industrial properties in Northeast and will make this available to possible investors.

PDC also worked with the Northeast Business Boosters to resolve the parking problem along Union Avenue. PDC looked at purchasing selected sites for this purpose but, according to Wong, current owners wanted exorbitant prices. PDC appears unwilling to use its powers of condemnation without community support.

The Program also called for a Target Area job program which PDC support. The possibility of mid-day parking right on Union Avenue is also being explored.

has yet to implement. According to the December "Project Status Report," development of "several of the elements of the jobs program" is being done in cooperation with the State Training and Employment Division.

A marketing and promotional program is also called for by the Program, yet PDC's status report indicates no such program is being developed. Rather, the status report points to flyers marketing PDC's city-wide Business Development Program.

The Program also calls for the creation of a "representative community task force to review progress in implementing the Northeast Strategy and to assist developing economic development direction for the area." To date, PDC staff have attended some meetings of, and provided some information for, the Northeast Economic Development Task Force, yet primary contact has been with the Northeast Business Boosters who are just one element in the community.

Peterson claims that there are two major reasons businesses are largely ignoring Northeast while expanding in other areas of Portland. The first, says Peterson, is the lack of lot-sizes large enough for light industry or, for that matter, any large building. The second impediment is the perception that any new development will be met by community opposition and, continued Peterson, "nobody wants to come in on a cloud of controversy." Nonetheless, PDC is hopeful about the future: "The people who live in a community," says Peterson, "are the best salesmen."

Next week: The *Observer* takes a look at how the community rates PDC and what the future may hold.

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