

# The Police Precinct Building: Black Economic Eggs In One Basket?

BY JAMES L. POSEY

**A STRANGE MIXTURE OF HOPE, ANXIETY, SKEPTICISM, APPRECIATION, FRUSTRATION AND ELATION PERMEATING THE ROOM AT BETHEL A.M.E.**

Church a few weeks ago. The occasion was a meeting of northeast Portland residents and business people, primarily African-Americans, gathered with city officials to discuss the tenant development plans for the highly-touted northeast police precinct/retail development project.

The project has come to symbolize the Katz administration's efforts to help revitalize northeast Portland. But the meeting, attended by Mayor Katz herself and chaired by a member of the King Neighborhood Association, could only be characterized as curious. It was such because there was an abiding sense that the project, a novel attempt at social engineering, represents a last chance for this community to reclaim itself. Yet one couldn't help but sense an equal amount of doubt about whether this project will really work.

Aided by the best of intentions, can a community, so long besieged by all manner of afflictions, heal itself? Mayor Katz continues to invest an extraordinary amount of political will in seeing that this project gets off the ground and at least gets a chance to become successful. But is it really enough? While politely respectful of all the efforts, the participants in the meeting questioned whether this project will actually result in Black prosperity.

At one point, an animated discussion erupted about the anchor tenant's role in the project. Some questioned how a video store could best serve a functional need in a community where there is so much dysfunction. They argued that, out of all the things Black folks really need, videos are way down on the list. Others questioned the wisdom of promoting an anchor tenant which has no Black ownership interest.

There was an unmistakable sense of desperation and frustration expressed by the community advisory committee and city officials in their attempts to attract a suitable anchor tenant. After submitting to the humiliating reality that no Blacks in this community had the capacity or will-

**Rebecca Jones Named New Executive Director Of SE Family YMCA**



Rebecca Jones

Jeremiah W. Balsler, President/CEO of the YMCA of Columbia-Willamette announced recently that Rebecca W. Jones has been selected as the new Executive Director of the Southeast Family YMCA at the John R. Leach Center. Ms. Jones was the former Southeast YMCA Senior Program Director starting in that position since 1992. Prior YMCA experience includes working at the Salem Family YMCA as Aquatics Director from 1988 to 1992. She began her career at the YMCA as Aquatics Director in 1975 at the Southeast Family YMCA.

## Town Hall

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Town Hall is open to the public but reservations are required.

ingness to serve as an anchor, it got down to crunch time. In order to meet project deadlines, the next best thing was to find anyone who had the money and was willing and able to provide the jobs. There appeared to be less concern for how vested the business is in building Black economic capacity.

But some are saying, "Hey, let's get this thing going. Don't pour cold water on it before we have a chance to give it a try. After all, some Blacks will open businesses in the retail space." Well, I'm down for that; but I've seen too many well intended projects come and go in this community with African Americans only vaguely receiving the benefits. It seems like every other nationality gets some play except Blacks. This is particularly true when social workers or bureaucrats try to manage and promote economic projects based on the notion that having a bunch of businesses lumped together is enough to make it work.

Now don't blame any of us at this point for being a bit doubtful. We just want white folks to design and support this deal for us as if it were their own and not look at it differently because it is for us. We want a sound business project. This can't be just

another ghetto experiment, characterized by enough economic rope for African-Americans to hang themselves.

On one hand, everyone seemed hopeful. But on the other, the questions are haunting. Is this the best we can do? Are we taking our time and doing it right? Are we making the same mistakes from the past? Is this project being designed to succeed? Why wasn't a Black-owned franchise chosen to locate in this project? Has PDC done enough to foster African-American ownership? And, have we adequately addressed the reasons why Fred Meyer moved out in the first place?

While these questions linger, there are signs that the precinct project is just the first in a series of plans intended to lift this community out of economic despair. Mayor Katz, and really all of the city commissioners, seems genuinely committed to doing the right thing. But as a community, we must continue to ask the hard questions and insist that not all the Black economic eggs be put in one basket.

James Posey is a small business owner with a background in social work and community activism.

## Word Challenge Answers:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A4

- courier--A:** Special messenger, emissary or spy carrying important information; as, "The courier...had to leave before night." Old French courier.
- vigil--D:** Period of careful watching; time of prayer during usual hours of sleep; as, Lincoln kept his "vigil at the window." Latin vigilia.
- niggling--C:** Petty; fussy; irritating; requiring painstaking work; as, niggling money worries, niggling details. Related to Norwegian nigla.
- sedition--B:** Insurrection, especially words or actions that incite rebellion against the government; as, He was fearful or being accused of sedition. Latin seditio.
- enfilade--A:** Raking gunfire along the length of a line of troops; as, The Yankee enfilade created havoc among the outnumbered Confederate soldiers. Old French enfiler (to thread on a string).
- baleful--D:** Menacing; ominous; destructive; as, a baleful glance. Old English bealoful.
- chary--D:** Cautious; wary; not giving freely; as, The newspaper editor was chary of giving credit. Old English cearig (sorrowful).
- purveyor--C:** Supplier of food or other provisions. Latin providre (to provide).
- summarily--B:** Promptly; without formality or delay; as, "All petitions were dealt with summarily." Latin summation.
- secede--C:** To withdraw formally from a federation, an alliance or the like as, The South could not secede from the Union without a civil war. Latin secedere (to go away).
- lickspittle--D:** Fawning, contemptible; person; servile flatterer; as, The general "assumed the lickspittle was trying to snatch back his command." Lick and spitte.
- enumeration--A:** Itemization; the act of listing, a detailing; as, "The clause appeared in the enumeration of the powers of congress." Latin enumerare (to count out).
- reconnoiter--B:** to survey or search out an enemy's position or situation; as, The general failed to reconnoiter. French reconnoitre.
- enormity--D:** Great wickedness; outrageous act or crime; as, The man didn't grasp the enormity of betraying his comrades in arms. Latin enormis (immense).
- celerity--C:** Swiftmess, speed; as, He proceeded to the business at hand with great celerity. Latin celeritas.



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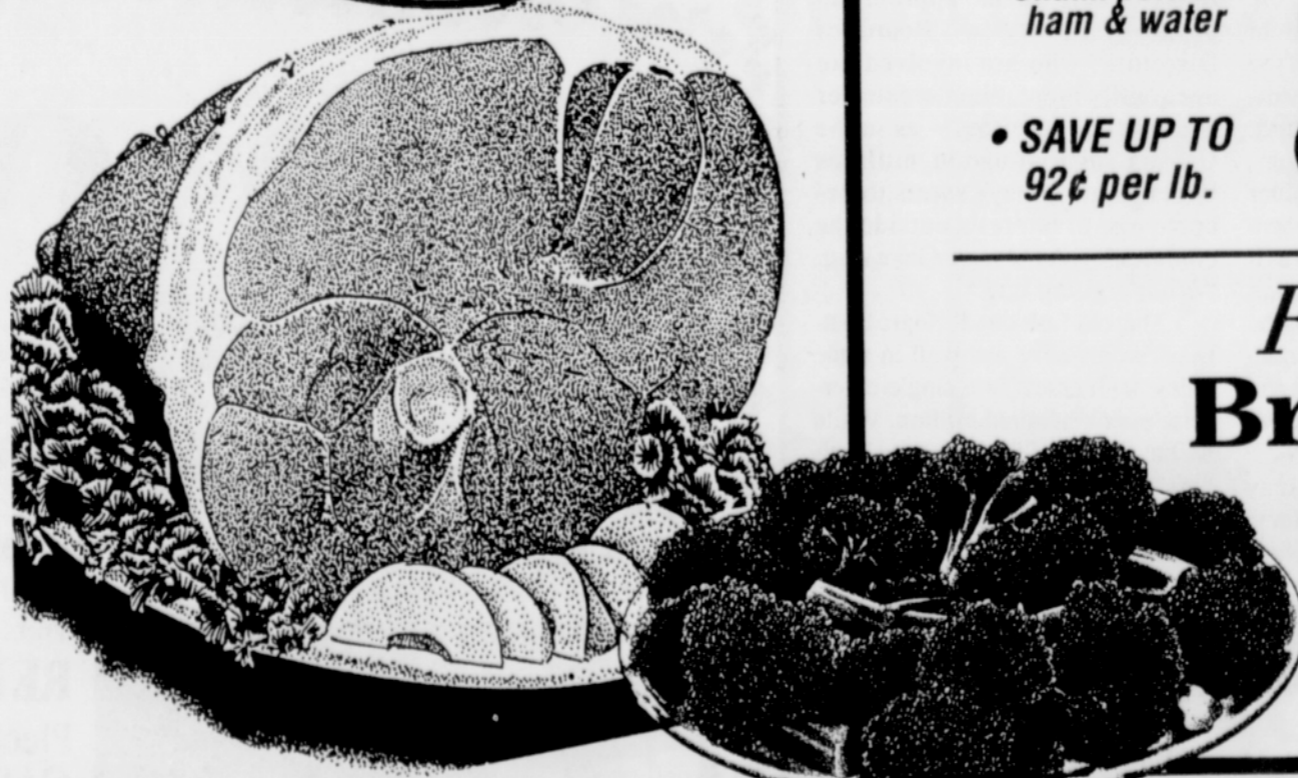
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