

# MLK to be re-designed

By Lee Pearlman

The middle portion of Northeast Martin Luther King Jr.

Boulevard, from Northeast Fremont to Shaver streets, has been targeted for an \$800,000 redesign next year.

The work will be the first phase of the state-funded Martin Luther King Boulevard Transportation Project. Plans call for removing the existing center median and replacing it with one four feet wide, narrowing the travel lanes to 10 feet and adding a seven foot wide parking lane on each side. The width of the existing median and travel lanes, and the normal width of parking lanes, are eight, twelve and eight feet respectively. There will also be new street lights and trees, and perhaps a new traffic signal at Northeast Mason Street, according to project manager Andre Baugh.

The project's advisory committee last week chose the Fremont-Shaver segment as the focus for the project's first phase based on two criteria: that it have the greatest need for assistance to attract development activity, and the greatest likelihood that improvements will lead to new development. The committee chose this segment over two other areas: between Northeast Russell and Stanton streets to the south, and Portland Boulevard and Dekum Street to the north. The first area was deemed to be progressing well already. Community leaders to the north felt the Portland-Dekum segment could better respond to a street redesign in another year or two.

Committee members had little doubt that Fremont-Shaver area has the greatest need for assistance, but some doubted whether it is likely to turn around dramatically soon even if it

gets it. The area has a few small businesses, including the new Horn of Africa restaurant, but also large vacant areas and considerable criminal activity in adjacent neighborhoods. One committee member commented, "This area has the greatest risk, but also the greatest chance for a dramatic im-

provement."

Baugh later told the Observer, "A lot of people have said that they're interested in doing business on MLK, 'but...' If this succeeds as we hope it will, we can eliminate the 'but.'"

The committee voted to target the area to the north during

the second phase of the project, and the area to the south during the third phase.

There may be some funds for aesthetic improvements such as new trees and light standards - but not street redesign - in the Russell-Stanton area this year, Baugh says.



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