

## Columbia Villa Resurrection

*continued from Front*  
Villa will be offered a spot among the 2,800 other public housing units in Multnomah county. Section 8 vouchers will also be offered as an alternative to direct relocation. Surveyors went door to door last week to ask residents which part of the city they would prefer to move to, how many rooms they would need and if they would be interested in returning to the Villa upon completion of the project.

Once relocation begins, Keating said residents will get lots of one-on-one attention from mobility counselors and relocation service coordinators. Staff will fully explain all options available; help with transportation to view other housing sites; complete paperwork and make sure residents know the pros and cons of public and subsidized housing. Keating said all moving expenses will be paid for, and if residents are physically unable to pack their boxes, someone will be provided to assist.

"We are really giving it a personal touch," Keating said. "We want to know in our hearts that these people are making a well informed decision, and once the Uhaul is packed up and the kids are

in school, we plan to follow up on their progress for the next four years."

### WHAT'S UNDERGROUND IS BAD

Some residents don't understand the need for such an extensive rebuild since Columbia Villa was recently remodeled a decade ago. Housing units were outfitted with weatherproof windows, fresh siding and new metal roofs.

"I don't get it," said Darnell Graves, a resident for 16 years. "They just built them all back up nice, and now they're going to tear them down."

But Keating said the most recent renovations were less about cosmetic updates and more about the health and safety concerns of residents. The building's 60-year-old wood siding was painted with lead-based paint. Many units had asbestos problems and the older windows were less energy efficient. It simply wasn't fair to let people live like that, Keating said.

Now it seems major infrastructure problems necessitate the demolition of the entire Villa, he added. Even though the Housing Authority does everything it can

to make the units livable, residents complain of rats and insect infestations. Because of old sewer and water lines, a clogged up toilet in one home can back up the entire main line.

"We've had to buy our own back-hoe," Keating said. "What's underground is bad. Its all these things that you don't see that are in constant need of repair."

### A GREAT VISION

Neighbors outside the Villas are conflicted about the upcoming changes. Some fear that greater population density inside the Villa will affect surrounding crime statistics and lead to traffic problems on already narrow streets. Others are opposed to adding more rentals in an area where half the residents are renters already.

Ionka Martin lives across the street from the West end of the Villa. She isn't excited about the demolition and doesn't plan on staying in the neighborhood once the construction begins.

"I'm not going to be here once the mess starts," Martin said. "After everybody starts moving, I'm leaving too."



Erma Badon is apprehensive about being relocated while the Villa undergoes reconstruction but has enjoyed her four years there. "I think it's good," she said, "I'll probably move back."

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

**African Americans are dying at higher rates than whites from smoking related diseases.**

Every year about  
**45,000**  
African  
Americans  
die from  
smoking related  
diseases.

**We don't have to...**

**Prevention works. It's never too late to quit. Ask your doctor about smoking related diseases today.**

**It's our right.**



**African American Health Coalition, Inc.**  
2800 N. Vancouver Avenue-Suite 100  
Portland, Oregon 97227  
Phone: 503-413-1850  
[www.aahc-portland.org](http://www.aahc-portland.org)



Made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Loretta Taylor and son, Marcel, 10, are comfortable with the reconstruction project for the Columbia Villa. Taylor is considering buying a home in the Villa once the project is completed. She thinks the plan for renovation is long overdue. "Finally," she said. "It took forever."

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Martin said she has always enjoyed the cultural diversity of Columbia Villa. Her three children are exposed to black, white, Asian and Indian lifestyles each day when they play in a grassy expanse centered between a handful of units. Her daughter once witnessed a traditional Ethiopian wedding

physically, emotionally and economically," Keating said. "We aren't going to save the world, but there is a great vision behind this plan."

The Housing Authority has selected Seattle-based Mithun Inc. and Robertson Merryman Barnes, Architects, of Portland to lead a design team that will out

Marchesi said. "Let's just say we are really building a neighborhood."

The central focus of the new design will be a town square featuring some small retail establishments, offices for community service providers, a youth center and possibly a residential care facility for the elderly. Marchesi said some members of the community harbor a misconception that the town square may turn into a strip mall. Keating assures that this is not the case.

"It's going to be a place to get help with homework and a latte at the same time," he said. "Residents will be able to get some stamps and a gallon of milk but also, working parents can take ESL classes or get on a computer and seek help looking for better jobs."

Marchesi also hopes to convince Tri-Met to connect a shuttle from the Villa to the new Interstate Max line.

As for those roads that go in circles, they will be torn up when the housing is torn down.

David Plechl contributed to this article

**"I'm not going to be here once the mess starts. After everybody starts moving, I'm leaving too."**

— Ionka Martin, Columbia Villa resident

"She was just amazed," Martin said, "it's a unique place."

Keating wants to emphasize that the revitalization of the Villas has nothing to do with any need to restructure the demographics of the community. He thinks the residents have always had a strong sense of unity and with the new design, that community will be better integrated into the surrounding Portsmouth neighborhood.

"These people are isolated -

the plan into action. A response from a community advisory committee and feedback from resident surveys will be used to finalize the drafts. The preliminary plans for redesign feature single-family homes, duplex units, two and three story townhouses intermingled among parkblocks. Shelley Marchesi, Director of Communications for HAP, declined to release the plans to the press.

"Its too soon to be specific,"

## Alliance Promotes Year Round Leadership Training

*continued from Front*  
run by Oregon Outreach, Inc., an organization that began providing job training and job placement to kids in north and northeast Portland in 1988.

The school is accredited through the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. Students

who have previously dropped out of school, or who are not succeeding in a traditional school are graduating from McCoy Academy with high school diplomas. Through a federal grant, McCoy provides students the opportunity to learn job skills by engaging in job shadowing, internships and job placement

in local businesses. Students can also earn high school and college credit simultaneously by enrolling in Portland Community College.

Students who graduate from McCoy have been provided a well rounded education and are prepared for work, as well as post-secondary education.

### SCHOLASTIC PLASTIC

**Giving credit to our schools.**

At Albina Community Bank, we're dedicated to helping our community. It's why we're in business. And we're always looking for new ways to make a difference.

That's why we've teamed up with VISA® to offer the Scholastic Plastic card. It's designed to give extra support to arts and athletics programs in Portland high schools. When you use your Scholastic Plastic VISA® card, we'll either donate 1% of your purchases to local programs in our five North and Northeast Portland high schools, or to the Portland Public Schools Foundation.

The Scholastic Plastic VISA® card. A way for us to help you ... help our community.

**SCHOLASTIC PLASTIC**  
Albina Community Bank

For the location nearest you:  
(503) 287-7537 • [www.albinabank.com](http://www.albinabank.com)

Member FDIC.

