

# Two Groups Vie for Abandoned Masonic Temple

Proposals calls for business park and fitness facility or music academy

BY SEAN P. NELSON, THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Two local non-profit community organizations are competing to purchase a Masonic Temple located at 5308 N. Commercial from the Portland Public School District for \$320,000.

Ethos, Inc. wants to restore the building and use it to provide music education to financially disadvantaged kids by turning the building into The Oregon Music Academy.

Another group, the Entrepreneurial Community Collective, or School of Champions Foundation, wants to turn the building and grounds into a business park with a major medical carrier serving as an anchor.

Ethos Executive Director Charles Lewis was under the impression that his group had garnered support for his proposal from the Port-

land Public Schools Real Estate Trust.

"On Wednesday, April 9 we will sign the contract. We would have 2 weeks to finalize building maintenance issues and we would have the deal closed by April 30," Lewis said.

But the issue had not been decided at press time for the Portland Observer on Tuesday.

"I think that's optimistic," said PPS Public Information Officer Lew Frederick in response to Lewis assertion. "They may be signing something but it's not a contract yet. At this point we haven't heard anything official."

The Portland School Board will ultimately decide the issue at a future meeting, Frederick said.

The school district put the property up for sale with the priority being given for "historic preservation, support for the arts and neighborhood and community goals in choosing a purchaser."

"What it came down to was that Ethos, Inc. said all along that they wanted to restore and renovate the building. The other group it wanted



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Two non-profit community organizations are competing to take over the abandoned Masonic Temple next to Jefferson High School in north Portland. One proposal calls for a music program, the other a business park with fitness facility.

to tear it down," Lewis said.

ECC School of Champions Foundation Founder Alvin Manus disagreed.

"We have not made that determination. We would certainly like to be able to save the building, but it has got to be cost effective for us," Manus said.

"We want to turn the building into a headquarters which will be part of an effort that will stimulate the economic and academic vitality of the community that Thomas Jefferson High School serves," Manus said.

Included in the foundation proposal would be a major medical carrier promoting fitness for life and sports medicine programs, which would work hand in hand with programs at Jefferson High School, he said.

The Masonic Lodge was built in 1923. It was damaged by a fire in 1981 and sold to the Portland Public School District in 1987 for \$80,000.

"The back corner was burned. The main issue is the building needs seismic repair to survive an earthquake," Lewis said.

# Plans Submitted for African American Museum



The D.C. Museum will open in 2011 as a Smithsonian affiliate. It will include many historical images and remembrances such as those above.

(AP)—A presidential commission submitted plans to Congress last week for an African American museum on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

The report clears the way members of Congress to introduce legislation to approve the site and the initial money to build the 350,000 square foot museum.

"The time is right. The time is now," said Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., a longtime civil rights activist who has been fighting for more than a decade to get the museum.

"Until we understand the full African American story, we cannot understand ourselves as a nation and as a people," Lewis said.

The museum was first authorized in 1929. But plans never made it off the ground, and the House and Senate never approved funding.

Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan.,

who will co-sponsor the bill to create the museum, said he has spoken to leaders in both houses and believes it can finally win approval.

"I see this museum as an integral

*I see this museum as an integral part in the healing of our nation's racial wounds.*

—US Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan.

part in the healing of our nation's racial wounds," Brownback said.

Brownback said he will work simultaneously to get both the site and the \$225 million in initial funding approved.

Actress Cicely Tyson, who served on the presidential commission, recalled visiting museums as a child, but not one focused on African American history.

"The young people today will finally have the opportunity to visit a national museum that conveys to them who they are, what they are, and why they are," Tyson said.

She said the prominent site, on congressionally controlled land near the Capitol Reflecting Pool, is fitting.

The museum site was the place where black and white Civil War veterans marched together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the union victory.

The plan calls for the museum to affiliate with the Smithsonian Institution.

It would open in 2011 and is expected to attract two million visitors a year.

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