

Housing Dreams Materialize for 200 Residents

Host helps the working class find their home

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It seems that housing options are often available for the filthy rich and dirt poor.

For example, on a gorged budget, people can choose between houses and condos, vintage and deco, east side and west side. On the other extreme, many organizations are dedicated to serving the needs of the poor and homeless, sometimes providing them with food, shelter and guidance to get their lives back on track.

But for those in between, the

working poor or working class, few safety nets are in place and they are left to fend for themselves with major expenses such as buying a home.

Yet experts agree that home ownership is good for individuals, good for families and overall good for communities.

Host Development identified that gap of service in 1989 and has since broken ground on 200 homes in north and northeast Portland.

Host is a nonprofit organization making home ownership affordable to Portlanders through partnerships with corporations, building



Jamar Brown (far left) joins a groundbreaking ceremony in north Portland in observance of Brown becoming the 200th homeowner helped by Host Development, a housing program for the working poor or working class. The ceremony included supporters Regan Leon of US Bank, John Miller, executive director of Host, Bob Repine, director of Oregon Housing and Community Services and Ted Gilbert, Host chairman of the board.

contractors and the Portland Housing Center.

Host raises donations and seeks out corporate grants to cover housing closing costs. Because of the relationships it has built in the community, much of the housing supplies and labor costs are donated or

very cheap.

Unlike Habitat For Humanity, a nonprofit doing similar work, Host's clientele qualify for mortgage loans and make monthly payments on their homes. Host primarily serves single heads of households and people of color, and cli-

ents qualify if they are at or below 100 percent of the median family income.

"A lot of programs exclude folks between 80 and 100 percent of the median family income. There are not many options for these people," said John Miller, executive director

of Host Development. "But that's your average worker and the way the Portland housing market is, it's really hard for that group. We feel like we're filling a gap."

The housing market in north and northeast Portland has changed tremendously in the last five years, Miller said. Lots that Host could once acquire for between \$10,000 and \$20,000 are now going for between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

"North and northeast Portland went from being not as desirable to being very desirable," Miller said.

For this reason, Host is expanding services to southeast Portland, and looking to buy property and build homes in the southeast Lents neighborhood, where property prices remain low.

The Host team plans to move the 200th family served by their program into their new home by Christmas. Thirty-five more houses have since begun construction.

"We're continuing to look for land," said Miller. "The biggest challenge is finding affordable land."

For more information, visit www.hostdevelopment.com.



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National Leader Reaches Out Locally

continued ▲ from Front

particularly focuses on enhancing reading," he said.

The campaign is in conjunction with an Education Summit next year in Washington, D.C. The event will mark 50 years since the Brown v. Board of Education court case which led to the desegregation of schools.

The Urban League is also member of the umbrella organization

Leadership Conference of Civil Rights, which is active on legislative and political fronts.

According to Morial, the Urban League protects civil rights for all.

"We have to reach out for the cause of diversity to Hispanics, to Asians, to Jewish-Americans, to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community, on a broad range of civil rights," he said.

Home Buying Fair

Event to offer mentoring and support

With the homeownership rate for African Americans in Portland lagging below the national average, a local volunteer group is striving to make this year's African American Homebuyer Fair an even bigger success.

Organizers with the African American Alliance for Homeownership hope those who take the first step by attending the fair will continue to make progress towards buying a home long after the event. To aid in

this effort AAAH has created the Homebuyer Coaching Project which pairs volunteer homeowners with homebuyer hopefuls to provide peer mentoring and support.

This year's fair is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 8 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Legacy Emanuel Hospital Atrium, 501 N. Graham.

People can pre-register for the fair by visiting the AAAH website at www.aaah.org or calling 503 285-5555, extension 558.

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Sniper Suspect Pleads Case Before Jury

continued ▲ from Front

Ferguson and terrorism suspect Zacarias Moussaoui, who decided to go it alone in court. Kevorkian is in prison, Bundy was executed in 1989, Ferguson is in prison for killing six people on a commuter train, and Moussaoui is awaiting trial on charges tying him to the Sept 11 attacks.

Wearing a suit and tie, Muhammad delivered his own opening statement Monday, telling the jury in rambling fashion that he is being persecuted by people who do not know the truth about the sniper shootings.

"There's three truths: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I always thought there was just one truth," he said. "Jesus said, 'Ye shall know the truth.'"

With Muhammad acting his own lawyer, the trial will probably become an unruly affair in

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— Paul Marcus, a law professor at the College of William & Mary

which the orderly, judicial courtroom atmosphere is interrupted by awkward motions or speeches from an untrained defendant, said Paul Marcus, a law professor at the College of William & Mary.

"I've never seen anything short of a disaster with someone representing themselves," Marcus said. "The prosecution doesn't like it, because they don't want to be viewed as beating up on a novice. It's also a very serious problem with the judge, should he actively intervene if the person begins using this as a kind of soapbox."

Marcus said Muhammad will probably be able to continue defending himself, with his lawyers on standby, as long as the judge considers him mentally competent.

"It's a very low standard, meaning that you understand the proceedings against you, and that you are savvy enough to cooperate," Marcus said.