



HOUSING *Special Edition*

City to Finance Housing Stock

Targeted to help city's poorest residents

For the first time, Portland city leaders have voted to provide permanent financial support to low-income housing by budgeting monies for new housing stock.

The Portland City Council authorized the sale of a Housing Opportunity Bond last week that will generate \$9 million to develop an additional 390 units of housing citywide, including 170 units of permanent supportive housing where residents will have access to job training and other services to stabilize their lives.

"Families and people with disabilities need a safe, decent place to live," said Commissioner Erik Sten. "Studies show that children do better in schools if they have stable housing and we are providing the opportunity for that to happen. The entire city will be better because of this investment."

Proceeds from the bond will be granted to non-profit housing providers to acquire, rehabilitate, and develop housing for the city's poorest and most difficult to house people including very low income families and people with disabilities.

One project to be funded is the Rose Quarter Workforce Housing and Employment Center, the old Ramada Inn that is scheduled to be rehabilitated into 176 units of stable housing and supportive services to people re-entering the workforce.

"Our program offers people the opportunity to become self-sufficient," said Richard Harris, executive director of Central City Concern the project sponsor. "It also will provide affordable housing for hard working people who work full-time at service-wage jobs yet can't afford to pay rent and buy food," he added.

Another housing project to benefit from the bond is the 37 unit Leander Court in southeast Portland.

Michael Anderson of Affordable Housing NOW thanked City

Council for finding a way to fund critically needed housing in a difficult budget environment.

He said housing affordability is an issue in communities across the state and he pledged to continue to work with the City and the newly formed Housing Alliance to get a permanent source of funding for housing statewide and to work on other strategies to reduce the gap between rents and incomes.

The bond will be paid back over 20 years from the city's general fund budget.

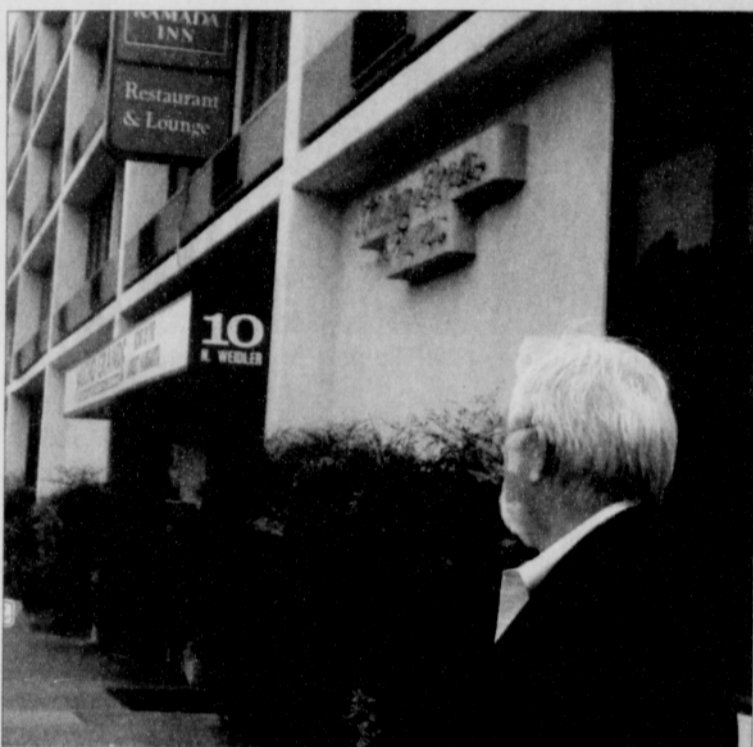


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
A Portland Observer file photo shows Richard Brown of Central City Concern and the former Ramada Inn slated to become housing stock for people transitioning back into the work force.

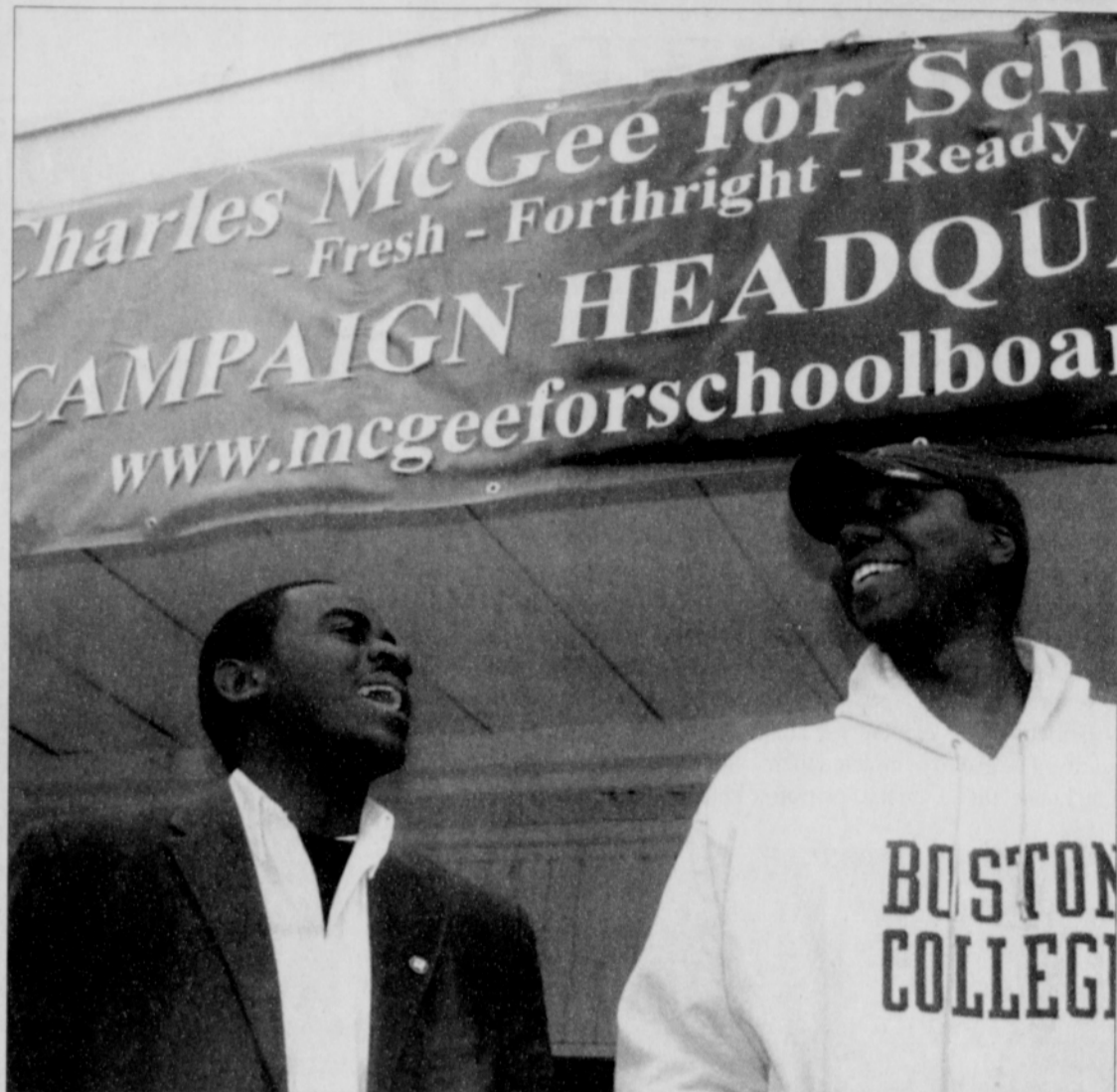


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Charles McGee laughs with Malik Bell in front of the campaign headquarters after Bell helped McGee put up the sign behind them.

Running for Change

continued ▲ from Front

who would ask tough questions and figure out why the system is not working for all the students." He feels that as a young African American, he can bring a dy-

namic to the board that others can't. "We need to embrace the cultural differences," McGee said. "We need to be honest with ourselves as a district. Having dialogues is a wonderful first step but we've got to get deeper than that. I know that as a person of color, what is most important is that whenever you help those that are least represented, and they begin to function at adequate levels, the system changes. Having a voice like mine on the board, my scope will be broader. I do believe that if you help out Blacks, Hispanics and Asian kids, you're helping out everyone else in the system."

McGee doesn't agree with the idea that he's exceptional as a young man working for a revolution in education.

"There are a lot of people who care about the system but are turning away because they don't think they can have an impact," he said. "I think that more than anything my campaign to me is the beginning of something greater, of young people saying we believe that we need to take a

seat at the table. If we are to lead and begin to change the system, we have to have a seat at the table. We need to help craft the decisions that make our generations. We can understand what works and what doesn't work." The need for change is vital, McGee said, and it's only by working with the community that things can transform.

"More than anything right now, Portland Public Schools are facing a lot of troubles," he said. "A lot of it is not necessarily things we've done in Portland but that the folks in Salem can't stop bickering. Schools will have to be closed, but what I would focus a whole lot on is listening to the folks at the bottom who help get you there. They are the most important people in the system. Coming up with a policy that promotes the common good. I am running because I see that now is the time for us to bridge the gap between community and government."

McGee invites voters to check out his website at www.charlesforschoolboard.com for more information.



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