



HOUSING

Final Touches on New Columbia

Renewed neighborhood rounds off its first year

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When the Housing Authority of Portland set out to revitalize Columbia Villa, everyone waited to see what would become of what was tagged Portland's only ghetto.

Three years later, construction at New Columbia is nearing an end, and neighbors who once occupied barracks-style buildings return to a suburban-style community with young trees planted in front of freshly built homes.

Revamping New Columbia was an experiment for the Housing Authority. Portland's first large-scale, mixed-income community is part of many others nationwide, awarded funds from the department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI grant, a project to revitalize aging public housing.

There was significant risk involved in uprooting and relocating nearly 1,300 residents, while they bulldozed their dilapidated, concrete neighborhood and pumped \$153 million into an ideally integrated and welcoming community. A place where, as you walk down the tree-lined street to the park, public housing doesn't look much

different than privately owned homes.

Mike Andrews, the person responsible for development at New Columbia, said the housing authority is preparing the final touches on New Columbia, which turns a year old this May.

They look forward to a busy summer with work on the commercial corridor called Main Street (North Trenton Avenue). The existing University Park and new McCoy Park will anchor a future coffee shop and small grocer. The main street also houses a 66-unit senior apartment complex, a learning center, boys and girls club and an elementary school under construction.

Leslie Esinga was hired by the housing authority to bring families together - through events like movie nights and musicals, dispute resolution. Esinga strives for a close-knit feeling among residents, but wants to attract people from outside the neighborhood as well.

Housing authority spokesperson Shelley Marchesi reported overwhelmingly positive feedback from residents. Many have confirmed that they're getting the com-



homebuilders to finish by March 2007.

After that point, New Columbia will be a diverse collection of people, from differing economic backgrounds and ethnicities, much like any other Portland neighborhood. How well it fares will be the true test of this Portland experiment.

Franklin Bautista (left) and Jorge Prez work on the rapid development at New Columbia in north Portland. The Portland Development Commission said residential construction is well under way, with completion by March 2007.

munity spirit they aimed for, and one homeowner told her it takes him 30 minutes to walk three blocks from the park to his home because he stops to chat so often.

Initial critics of the project feared the housing authority would simply lose track of previous public housing occupants, who would be left with no support system.

Portland learned from the mistakes of HOPE VI projects around the country, and conveniently scrutinized the efforts of our neighbor Seattle, which has undergone several projects.

Andrews said construction of 556 housing authority-controlled units would be complete by October, and they expect private

Free Tips For Home Remodeling

For most homeowners, the toughest first step in any remodeling project is knowing where to begin and which questions to ask.

Fortunately for Portland area homeowners, help is on the way this week at Neil Kelly Company's Saturday Seminar Series, April 8 at its Westside showroom in Lake Oswego.

Three of the firm's most talented and experienced designers will provide first-hand answers on design, professional remodeling and new materials at the free seminars. The one-hour sessions are informal in style, allowing for plenty of questions.

On April 8, area homeowners will see recent projects, hear new trends in professional kitchen and

bath remodeling and receive tips on floor covering and countertop selection.

At 9:30 a.m., certified bath designer Rhonda Knoche will present the latest bath design trends, information on fixture selection, and recent award-winning projects.

At 11:00 a.m., certified kitchen designer Robin Rigby-Fisher will share the latest in kitchen design trends, offer tips on creating an efficient workspace and review several award-winning projects.

At noon, an appliance and cooking demonstration features the latest in Dacor kitchen appliances.

At 1:00 p.m., designer Chelly Wentworth will discuss the latest trends, merits and selection of cov-

ering and countertop materials.

For seminar and schedule information see www.neilkelly.com or call 503-335-9235.

Publicly Funded Candidates Officially Join Council Race

continued  from Front

neighborhood activist considers herself an experienced outsider, an attribute she says is missing on the current City Council.

She promises to strengthen neighborhoods and support schools, and pledges to perpetuate the openness of city government and "listening by leading" approach, fostered by Mayor Potter.

Emily Boyles is another grassroots candidate, with more than 20 years experience in non-profits. She's surfaced as the candidate for Portland's Russian and Slavic communities. Boyles, who

lives in outer Southeast Portland, promises to find low-cost solutions to help low-income, disabled and immigrant communities.

Erik Sten is running for a fourth term on the Council, and is the candidate with the highest profile. He is associated with the notorious Portland Aerial Tram and mismanagement of the Water Bureau, but Sten is also known as the council's busiest homeless advocate, and with City Auditor Gary Blackmer authored the campaign finance program. His campaign platform focuses on affordable housing, ending homelessness and environmental issues.



Meet with the Mayor and City Council:
Community Budget Forums

Take part in the budget process!

Saturday April 8, 10:00 AM - Noon
- Focus: Budget Team Recommendations -
St. Andrew's Gym / 806 NE Alberta
www.portlandonline.com/communitybudget

Budget Hearing: Thursday, May 11th
6:30 pm-8:30pm

Location: MLC Auditorium 2033 NW Glisan

ADA accessible - Special needs: 823-4519 in advance

More info & childcare/interpretation inquiries:
823-5288

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