

HOUSING **企**

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 suburbanesque community with young trees planted in front of freshly built homes.

Revamping New Columbia was an experiment for the Housing Authority. Portland's first largescale, 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, different than privately owned

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

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 he stops to chat so often. an elementary school under con-

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 closeknit 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 conpublic housing doesn't look much firmed that they're getting the com-

from the park to his home because Initial critics of the project feared the housing authority would simply lose track of previous public housing occupants, who would be

munity spirit they aimed for, and

one homeowner told her it takes

him 30 minutes to walk three blocks

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

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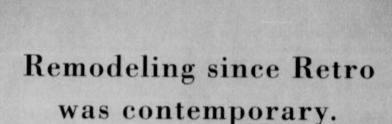
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After that point, New Columbia will be a diverse collection of people, from differing economic backgrounds and ethnicities, much like any other Portland neighborhood. How well it fares will be the true test of this Portland experiment.

homebuilders to finish by March

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.





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On April 8, area homeowners will see recent projects, hear new Wentworth will discuss the latest

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Publicly Funded Candidates Officially Join Council Race

continued A from Front

self an experienced outsider, an at- immigrant communities. tribute she says is missing on the current City Council.

neighborhoods and support He is associated with the notorious schools, and pledges to perpetuate Portland Aerial Tram and mismanthe openness of city government agement of the Water Bureau, but and "listening by leading" ap- Sten is also known as the council's

grassroots candidate, with more authored the campaign finance prothan 20 years experience in non- gram. His campaign platform foprofits. She's surfaced as the can-cuses on affordable housing, enddidate for Portland's Russian and inghomelessness and environmen-Slavic communities. Boyles, who tal issues.

lives in outer Southeast Portland, promises to find low-cost solutions neighborhood activist considers her- to help low-income, disabled and

Erik Sten is running for a fourth term on the Council, and is the She promises to strengthen candidate with the highest profile. proach, fostered by Mayor Potter. busiest homeless advocate, and Emily Boyles is another with City Auditor Gary Blackmer



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