



PHOTOS BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Rod Graves ponders the effects of gentrification in the parking lot behind New Born Tribe, an Afro-Caribbean-themed venue and store on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

# Majority Flips on MLK Corridor

continued ▲ from Front

lies that have moved toward the suburbs. Jefferson currently draws 20 percent of its students from outside the neighborhood.

"Working with the population that's here," academy principal Macarre Traynham wants her new Academy of Science and Technology at Jefferson to "help encourage minorities to major in math and sciences because we're underrepresented in those areas."

At the same time, Traynham has established educational pathways that recognize the neighborhood's shifting demographic makeup, hoping to lure more neighborhood families back to the school. "Having an environmental program will encourage Jefferson to be more diverse," she says.

The developments that serve the black community have some people changing their mind about the negative effects of gentrification. "Ask me 15 years ago when I was in my Public Enemy phase, and I would have been like some of these guys who complain about all the white people in this neighborhood," said Rod Graves behind MLK Boulevard's New Born Tribe. "But



Blazers' Boys and Girls Club members rally to try to attract more members. The club remains predominantly black even though the neighborhoods along Northeast Martin Luther King Boulevard are no longer majority African American.

now I think it's all about improvement and unification."

Graves argues "this is Oregon, a white state, so we shouldn't be surprised." Even the Portland School District, with by far the highest pro-

portion of African Americans in Oregon, is only six percent black.

The African-American population is spreading out, but still comes together in the neighborhood for services, events like Good in the

Hood or simply to spend time with friends and family.

Moriah says, "North/northeast Portland will always be home for the black community, even if we're living out in Gresham."

# Portland Police Chief: 'We can do better'

continued ▲ from Front

"Officers relate to me that they see younger and younger kids with guns," she added.

Sizer said that the gang enforcement team isn't as robustly staffed as in the late 1990s. Trends change as a new generation becomes involved in gangs, she said, citing the example of young people involved in gangs that aren't as overt about proclaiming their affiliations.

Figures also show that Portland has had to contend with a much smaller force overall.

According to police bureau statistical reports, the number of sworn officers per 1,000 residents dropped from more than two throughout the 1990s to 1.79 in 2005. Meanwhile, Portland's population has increased by 44,000 in the past eight years.

As Portland has grown and cops become scarcer, community distrust continues to exist. Sizer said it is difficult to put officers out on more community friendly walking and biking beats because staffing is stretched so thinly. However, she noted her request for additional positions in this year's budget.

"It looks promising," she said. "We could do better with more."

Meanwhile, the bureau is restructuring by converting administrative posts to street positions and is decentralizing school police officers, who now work out of precincts rather than Portland Public Schools headquarters.

Much like last spring's racial profiling forums, the police chief doesn't skirt around police shortcomings when it comes to dealing with minorities.

She acknowledged that the poor relationship between police and the north/northeast constituency of-

ten stems from officers' lack of history. While she defended the city's decision not to mandate where officers live, she said it is important to ground officers in the past, making her point by referencing the "possum incident."

For the uninitiated, the possum incident happened in 1982 when officers Craig Ward and Jim Galloway tossed four dead opossums in front of the Burger Barn, a black-owned restaurant in northeast Portland.

Viewed as racial intimidation that was reminiscent of the pre-Civil Rights era, the act caused a deep rift

before a pension change. She approached the Portland Observer interview and her City Club speech with a new idea to improve hiring standards - easing college requirements that overlook qualified applicants by focusing on academics instead of relevant police and community skills.

Officers must have at least two years of college but Sizer is considering switching the requirement to a high school diploma or General Educational Development certificate.

She also wants to streamline the hiring process that sometimes takes

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-Police Chief Rosie Sizer

between the police and African Americans that resonated long after it was forgotten by most of the media and the public.

"If a 24-year-old police officer even knows anything about it they may not have that perspective," Sizer said. "So what can those individuals do to get beyond history?"

Her answer is to develop better training around racial issues by placing community mentors with young officers and scheduling more "program time" with officers. That means more time spent with youth and other residents in non-patrol settings.

"We have a lot of community and relationship building, but we're not effective when dealing with minorities," she said.

Facing the question of a diverse force, Sizer frankly admitted the bureau is lacking in women and minorities, especially since several minority officers recently retired right be-

a year to complete.

Regarding the high-profile issue of Taser use, Sizer defended the officers who used the stun gun on a diabetic woman last month, but because of pending litigation, she could not comment on the case of Sir Millage, a 15-year-old African American autistic boy who was beaten and Tasered 15 times last December after officers viewed him as a threat.

Bureau policy does not fully prohibit Taser use against individuals under 12 or older than 60, pregnant women or people known to be "medically fragile," if the person in question is armed with a weapon, suicidal or can't be controlled with other force options.

"Taser use is discouraged but allowed with special consideration" in these situations, Sizer said.

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# Beating Housing Odds

continued ▲ from A8

"Phylliss said you can start shopping now" she explained. With the help of her Realtor Kria Lacher, she began searching for homes in her affordable price range.

Finally, after a few weeks of searching she found a two-bedroom one-bath house in the Lents area for \$146,000. The home needed some work before it would be ready to occupy. Fortunately her PDC loan included the funds she would need to fix up the home. PDC's Construction Advisor helped her obtain complete bids from competitive contractors. In addition, she qualified for a grant from the City of Portland to reduce lead hazards in the home and make it safe for her new-born granddaughter who will live with her along with her daughter. Her home is midway through being rehabbed and in June she plans on moving in.

In reflecting about what advice to she would give others, she suggests, "Go for it! Go to the classes

and find out. You never know until you find out."

When asked how buying a home has changed her life, she states, "It makes me feel good about myself. Really good!" Her new found pride though is really not just about owning a home. To her it's really about being a good grandmother.

"I have a nice place for my grand kids. A big yard," she said.

While she is quick to give everyone else credit, the key ingredient to her success though was Knox herself. She is the one who made the first call, learned everything she could, became "mortgage ready", took action at each step of the way, and finally "Never" said "never."

Resources: Portland Development Commission, [www.pdc.us/housing](http://www.pdc.us/housing), 503-823-3400; Oregon Bond Loan, [www.OregonBond.us](http://www.OregonBond.us), 1-877-ST8-BOND; Portland Housing Center, [www.PortlandHousingCenter.org](http://www.PortlandHousingCenter.org), 503-282-7744.

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