

# Momentum Builds for Vanport Square Development

continued ▲ from Front

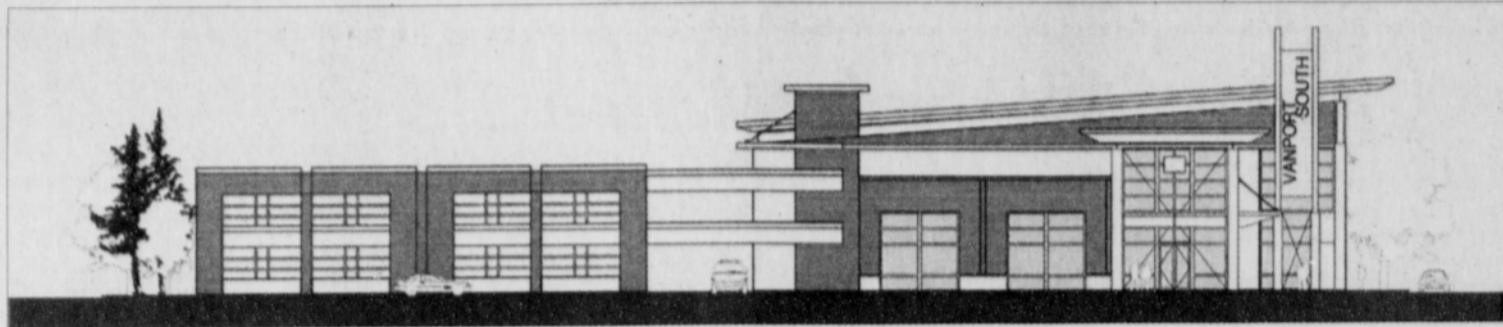
business leader, and Jeana Wooley, a community activist. The same duo was behind the first phase of Vanport Square, already under construction two blocks north.

Begun seven years ago as a multi-block, 500,000 square foot mega-project for economic development in the heart of Portland's African American community, Vanport Square got a dramatic start in March with ground breaking for a 40,000 square foot structure that will house 13 to 15 businesses.

PDC staffer Bernie Kerosky told the commission last week that 80 percent of the spaces have been sold, and that the building, now 50 percent complete, is due for completion in October.

Adam Milne will become one of the first business owners to operate at Vanport Square when he expands his Old Town Pizza restaurant. Milne also is a neighborhood resident who endorses the latest development.

"It will lead to a critical mass that will lead to success for all involved," he said. Representatives of the Vanport Project Advisory Commit-



An artist's rendering shows the Magic Johnson 24-Hour Fitness coming to Northeast Alberta and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The development is the latest phase of Vanport Square, a minority-owned commercial and retail development under construction and supported by the Portland Development Commission.

*In a lot of ways this is a catalyst. This is the first national brand willing to pay the kind of rent this boulevard deserves. It tells others that the boulevard is retail-ready.*

— Ray Leary



The 32,000 square foot Heritage Project on MLK is just being completed, and last month, PDC sold a parcel on Northeast Beech Street to a group of investors who will create a headquarters and clinic for Planned Parenthood, plus 10,000 square feet

of ground floor retail.

The latest Vanport development had some controversial components. PDC is selling the parcel for \$600,000 when its assessed value is \$2.3 million. PDC's Bruce Allen said the element that made the bargain price necessary was the parking garage, which will cost \$3.5 million and is essential to attract health

club members.

Kerosky said the sale was calculated to allow the development team to meet its obligations and make a 15 percent profit. (He later said it would probably be slightly less.)

Should Leary and partners gain more than 15 percent profit after 11 years, they will pay PDC the difference up to a maximum of \$1.7 million. Leary pointed out that the \$15 million cost of construction will be

done entirely with private funds.

Faye Burch of the National Association of Minority Contractors protested that Vanport Phase One did not have a sufficient number of minority contractors. She asked for "a specific condition" for a better performance in the new phase.

Steve Block of 24-Hour Fitness said the health and athletics center will be the 15th facility the company operates in the Portland area, but will be the first Magic Johnson Signature gym located outside California, containing photos and memorabilia of the former NBA star.

"We were ready to go a year ago," he said.

Leary later told the Portland Observer that, "This is one of several gratifying moments — and I emphasize moments — because we have a volume of work in front of us. There's architecture, design review and permitting. It's a step toward our vision."

## Leadership Role Welcome Surprise

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NAACP, but before she and the new Portland executive committee can make strides in education and empowerment, they start from the ground up, increasing membership and rebuilding a coalition with fellow organizations.

"We're pretty much going back to a grassroots approach, restoring the legacy of the Portland branch," she said. "People want to say revitalize, but I say restoration."

For scores of community-

minded activists in Portland, seeing such a young mind lead the branch is an exciting step forward. McGee said she has received dozens of calls from the likes of Sen. Avel Gordly, Equity Center Director Joyce Harris and youth advocate Mark Jackson. Many have told her she faces a difficult road, but not to allow failure to stop her from moving forward.

Jackson, who has worked with McGee through his student organization REAP, Inc., said he called her soon after he read the news of her nomina-

tion.

"It's a sign that the landscape is changing, in terms of a fresh vision and fresh ideas," Jackson said, pointing out that as McGee has a dual perspective of Africa and America, she understands the organization's fundamental goal of racial equality.

"Why it (the branch) subsided, I don't know, but I do know Charlene has the wherewithal to restore the organization to its original purpose."

McGee's family has been supportive as well. Her brother

Charles is a few years younger, but he took time to give his sister advice and share his experience running for the Portland Public School board in 2005, when he was just 19.

Now, as McGee's days are crammed full with meetings and events on top of her full-time job, the words of America's first African American Congresswoman ring true in her mind.

"Shirley Chisholm said 'service is the rent we pay for living on earth.' To me, now is my time to pay."

FRIDAY MAY 25<sup>TH</sup> 2007 MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

WEST COAST JOINING OF THE VOICES

LOS ANGELES, CA  
TIM BISHOP BROWN & THE MIRACLE MASS CHOIR

SEATTLE, WA  
DANELL DAYMON & ROYALTY

PORTLAND, OR  
DERRICK MCDUFFY & CHOSEN GENERATION

DOORS OPEN AT 7PM  
EVENT STARTS AT 8PM

FREE ADMISSION

HIGHLAND CHRISTIAN CENTER  
7600 NE GILMAN  
PORTLAND, OR  
DR. W.G. HARDY, JR., SENIOR PASTOR

PROJECT NO: 78,104

# ESCAPE.

Just west of Portland 1,700 acres of hilly forestland between HWY 26 and Vernonia is now protected as a state park. Constructed with funds from the Oregon Lottery, "Stub" Stewart State Park is Oregon's first new full service park in more than 30 years. It's less than 30 miles from Portland and it opens July 2007.

With 80 campsites, 15 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking, a cabin village, a horse camp, a hike-in camp for backpackers, interpretive exhibits, a sheltered picnic ground and a hill-top observation tower for sightseeing and stargazing, Stub Stewart is an ideal place to escape into nature — whether you want to get away or just hear yourself think.

In 1998, Oregon's state parks were in trouble. There wasn't enough money to maintain them and some were in danger of closing, which is why Oregonians voted to use Lottery profits to support state parks. Today, Oregon is able to make investments in all of its parks and is buying and developing new park land across the state because of the Lottery funding.

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