

Downtown Treasure for Elderly, Disabled

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revival apartment building, operating as either a hotel or apartment building since it was built. In 1981, it was renovated into 37 affordable apartments under the Oregon Housing and Community Services' Elderly and Disabled Bond Program and given a 30 year Section 8 rental subsidy contract.

By 2008, the Admiral was at risk of losing its affordability due to the expiring Section 8 subsidies.

REACH purchased the building to preserve the housing for the residents, several of whom have lived in the building for over 20 years.

The relocation of residents at the Admiral was temporary, with the expectation that residents would move back in once the repairs were completed. Admiral residents are fortunate, as many relocations have been a one-way trip, as downtown Portland has gentrified.

The building has been carefully renovated with modern comforts, while retaining and restoring its elegant, historic character. Inside, REACH has dedicated the community room to Lee Bradford Lacey, a long-time Portland civic activist who lived in the Admiral for 27 years. Lee suffered from the debilitating genetic disease epidermolysis bullosa. Despite the herculean challenges in his life, Lee lived with dignity, grace, and a strong sense of giving back.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Bathsbeba Israel, a vendor at the new Boise-Eliot Outdoor Market, serves up a plate of vegetarian rotti with cornbread.

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Bridging Cultures

continued ▲ from front

needed extra cash. A longtime ambition of his, he decided to make a go of it after having a few encouraging conversations after the election.

"This market will look like the neighborhood," said Burton.

He soon began beating the bushes for support for the market and met Muhammad, whom he hit it off with. Muhammad loved the idea and quickly signed on.

Standing under the hot August sun, Muhammad explained that he hopes the market will help serve as a bridge between older African American residents of the area and the new whiter and more affluent new-comers.

"In order to merge they need a unifying thought or a common thread," said Muhammad, who hopes that bringing together hidden talent in the neighborhood in a social setting will help create a cornerstone for a stronger community.

One of the key components of the market is its focus on all things local. It includes local food, crafts, arts, and music.

Bathsbeba Israel has been a regular at the market where she set up a booth selling all-natural body oils and lotions, hand-made jewelry, and organic vegetarian food.

"It's been excellent, everyone here is like family," said Israel of her experience

Speaking over a guitarist playing in the background, whose repertoire includes jazz standards like "Autumn Leaves" and Bob Marley's "Stir it Up," Israel said that street vendors are a common sight in New York City, where she moved from about four years ago looking for a better place to raise her kids. An entire culture surrounds street vendors, she explained, and sees Portland as ripe for people who want to create their own opportunity.

"I just want to bring a little bit of the city to the West Coast," said Israel. "This opens up Portland for another avenue."

Burton and Muhammad have gotten plenty of help of other people in northeast Portland Ben Kaiser, a property developer who owns the lot, is letting the market operate free

of charge to get it started. La Von Van, the owner of neighboring Club Twelve 22, and Kenneth Doswell, the owner of clothing outlet Betty Jean Couture, provide electricity. The Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods, which helped launch the King Farmers Market, is also helping get the word out.

"It's been a real range from produce to arts and crafts to resale items where people have come and done their own little mini yard sales," said Paige Coleman, the executive director of the coalition, who was helping sell raspberries, peaches, and strawberries of a local vendor at the market last Saturday.

Coleman said that at the market she's seen people bump into each other who haven't seen each other in years, and that the vendors at the market, who pay \$20 for a booth, often change each week.

Organizers of the market liken it to a traditional village economy based on community relationships and self-sufficiency. With people still reeling from the effects of the great recession, many are looking for less conventional means of making money, which organizers hope the market provides an opportunity for. They also hope that it will create a lasting local economy that's relatively insulated from the national business cycle.

Long term, Burton and Muhammad hope to launch other projects in lots in northeast Portland, particularly ones geared toward urban agriculture. Vegetables will be grown on one lot and sold on another.

But for now they're concentrated on generating interest in the current market with the aim of keeping it open everyday year round.

To get more attention, Muhammad and Burton have are setting up a fence of 4 by 8 foot art panels around the market. Once it's finished, they plane to auction off the panels with half going to the artist, and half going to the market.

Burton likens the interest, so far, to a wind current: sometimes strong and blustery, other times a gentle breeze.

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