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Main Street Transformation

City prioritizes business and diversity in Cully neighborhood

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One of Portland's most diverse neighborhoods that in the past has suffered a lack of investment, Cully is scheduled to undergo a main street transformation to perk up the northeast neighborhood's sparse business district and make street travel easier and safer for residents.

After hearing recommendations from Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Bureau of Transportation and talking with the Cully residents, the city has adopted the Cully Commercial Corridor and Local Street Plan.

Scheduled to take effect in October, the plan addresses the neighborhood's need for better roads and zoning changes along Cully Boulevard while also keeping in mind the risk of housing price inflation and gentrification.

Unlike most Portland main streets that offer a plentiful range of local-serving mom and pop shops and commercial staples, the diagonal-running Cully Boulevard is a scatter of residential homes, auto bodies and ethnic eateries.

According to Debbie Bischoff of the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the mostly residential neighborhood lacks business support largely due to zoning restrictions.

While Northeast Cully Boulevard was identified as a "Main Street" in the city's Metro Regional Plan, 75 percent of the main street is zoned as residential. Only 2 percent of Cully is zoned for commercial business, while typically a neighborhood would have 10 percent, said Bischoff.

Zoning changes along Cully Boulevard and Killingsworth Street will allow more commercial, residential and mixed-use development, as well as employment uses in the area.

In three public hearings with about 75 of Cully's 13,000 residents in attendance, Bischoff says the community expressed a desire to create more local-serving businesses that reflect the needs and diversity of the neighborhood.

"Residents wanted more opportunity for local people to benefit," said Bischoff. They desired to see more cafés, pizza parlors, dental offices, bookshops, barber shops, grocery stores, and ethnic stores that serve the Cully's diverse population of Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians and African immigrants.

The plan also includes a local street plan to increase street connectivity, develop new designs for improving local streets and prioritize routes to notable community destinations.

According to Bischoff, Cully has the second highest number of unpaved streets in Portland. Annexed to the city in the mid 1980s, she says Cully lacks a lot of urban services that the city requires (like sidewalks) and that other neighbor-



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Luis Rodriguez (left) and Nathan Teske of the non-profit Hacienda Community Development Corporation are advocates of a plan to improve the quality of life for diverse populations in Cully. A commercial corridor and local street plan calls for the development of affordable housing in the northeast Portland neighborhood, and fosters plans for new businesses that reflect the needs and diversity of the community.

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