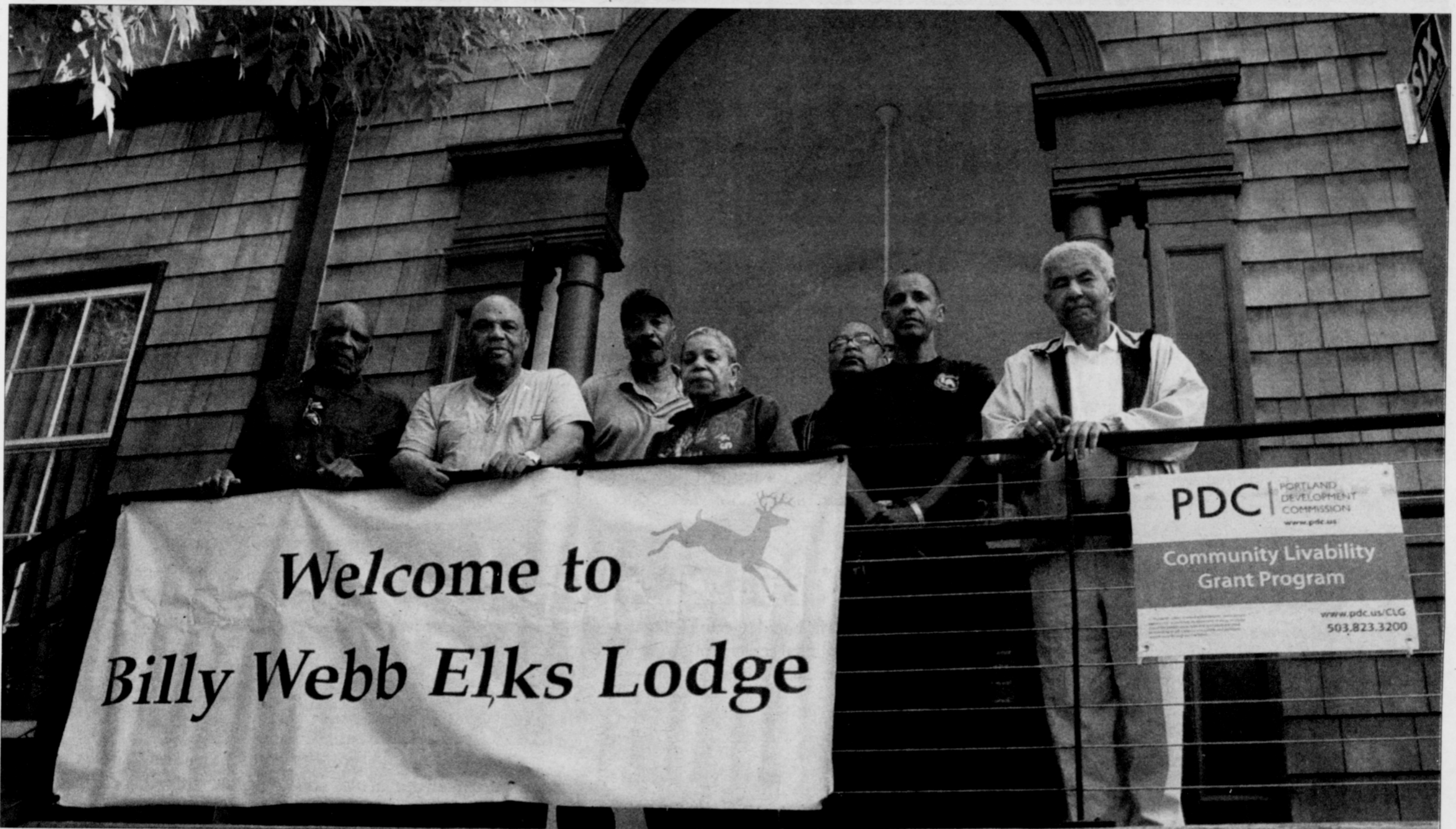




Mississippi
Alberta
North Portland

METRO

Vancouver
East County
Beaverton



Billy Webb Elks Lodge members outside the historic 1926 building. The site at North Tillamook Street and Williams Avenue is a symbol of African-American history in one of Portland's most historic black neighborhoods.

Community Treasure

Historic Elks Lodge continues to serve

The Billy Webb Elks Lodge remains as one of the only buildings in inner north and northeast Portland that still stands as a symbol of Portland's black history in a traditional African-American neighborhood.

The story of the building begins with Mrs. E.S. Collins, who chaired the downtown YWCA's Committee of Color, which voted in 1902 to exclude black women from its membership.

Mrs. Collins was determined to help the African-American community establish its own YWCA, and helped to place a portable structure on the northeast corner of North Williams Avenue and Tillamook Street in 1921.

In 1926, Mrs. Collins made an "anonymous gift" of \$12,000 to enable a black branch of the YWCA to build a permanent structure on the site. Eventually the NAACP had an office in the basement.

During World War II, the building was turned over to the United Service Organiza-

tions (USO) for the use of "colored" soldiers. YWCA services were moved back downtown and the participation of blacks in the YWCA ceased to exist.

After the war ended in 1947, the YWCA got its building back but the participation of blacks in the YWCA never met its pre-war level. As the participation began to lag, the downtown YWCA board of directors decided to sell the building.

The new buyers were the Elks. The group was committed to save the structure while at the same time members were distraught over the beginnings of a displacement of black Portlanders from the nearby community.

What was once a thriving African-American community was changing before their eyes. The building of the Memorial Coliseum in what is now the Rose Quarter started a forced migration of African Americans out of their traditional community. It was followed by the construction of I-5 and the later the Fremont Bridge. By the early 1970s, the

Emanuel Hospital expansion project, which was never completed, forced many other African Americans out of their homes.

The final push of black Portlanders out of many parts of inner north and northeast has come in the past two decades with the loss of low income and affordable housing.

After falling into disrepair from years of neglect, Portland's National Association of Minority Contractors focused their time, effort and resources to renovate Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, completing their work in 2009.

Most recently, the lodge has been upgraded with a full air conditioning system and new plumbing which was funded through a Community Livability Grant provided by the Portland Development Commission.

The Billy Webb Elks Lodge is open for business, offering useful services to the community. It provides a low-key environment for members and friends who are

basically 35 and over (or are mature.) Normally, on Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays you can find friendly games of bid whist or dominoes for your entertainment. The lodge has added a deli menu with great sandwiches.

Activities at the lodge are always evolving. On Thursday nights there's line dancing lessons at 7 p.m. (except the third Thursday of each month); Shirley Nanette is back for Sunday night jazz at 6 p.m. on the first and third Sundays; while karaoke, a new feature, is on the second and fourth Sundays starting at 6 p.m.

Depending on the scheduling, the lodge provides free or low-cost meeting space to community-based nonprofit organizations. The lodge also provides free space for funeral repasts (depending on scheduling).

The lodge is available for rental for all kinds of occasions. You're encouraged to call the lodge at 503-284-4853 or drop by the facility at 6N. Tillamook St.