

The



Happy Thanksgiving



The Portland Observer 43

'City of Roses'



Volume XLIII
Number 46



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • November 27, 2013

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PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A nearly 2 acre parcel of land at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Alberta Street is proposed as the future site of a Trader Joe's specialty grocery store. The Portland Development Commission will sell the property at a fraction of its cost to spur economic activity in the neighborhood.

Free Land Deal PDC defends controversial development

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Portland Development Commission is defending its move to bring the national specialty grocer Trader Joe's to the rapidly developing King Neighborhood in northeast Portland.

Economic development in the long gentrifying neighborhood can raise the alarm of longtime residents, especially low and middle-income African-Americans who have lost their homes, but the economic development agency maintains that this deal will not contribute to further gentrification, but in fact help people stay in the neighborhood and "prosper".

Not everyone agrees though.

The location in question is a 2-acre site at the intersection of two of the city's rapidly changing streets, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Alberta Street. Houses and businesses

on the property had been removed from several lots over the years as the PDC worked to invigorate the heart of Portland's traditional black community with the adjacent Vanport Square, a retail hub that was created by minority and women-owned developers as a magnet for minority entrepreneurs.

PDC had been in talks with various developers to double the size of the Vanport Square project by luring a highly attractive retailer; one that would bring more foot traffic to the other vendors along the development.

At one point during the mid 2000's it looked like former NBA star and businessman Magic Johnson's, Magic Johnson Enterprises would ink a deal to bring a 24 Hour Fitness to the space but late in negotiations that plan fell through.

Since that failed attempt, PDC followed a path that would fill the space with an anchor grocer, a vision that drew some support from the King Neighborhood Association and oth-

ers. According to city data at the time, the area was deprived enough to be deemed a "food desert," even with big-name retailers like Safeway and Fred Meyer serving the neighborhood, and various smaller grocers like the Alberta Co-op and Cherry Sprout even closer-in.

With this justification, PDC moved forward with their plans. Around 2011, they began talks with California-based developer Majestic Realty Co. to bring Trader Joe's to the area.

The retail chain extended a stipulation of secrecy in talks with the PDC, which may have stemmed some outcry from the public once the details of the deal were revealed.

Although not yet legally set in stone yet, Majestic Realty

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