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PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Andrew Colas of Colas Construction outside the Oregon Convention Center on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard where his Portland-based firm won a \$27 million contract to make renovations to the 30-year-old facility, the largest contract ever awarded to a minority-owned business by Metro regional government.

Minority firm wins biggest ever Metro job

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A \$27 million construction project, the largest ever doled out to a minority-owned business from the regional government Metro has been awarded to Colas Construction, a black-owned and longtime Portland company.

The successful bid means Colas will be responsible for the work to revamp the Oregon Convention Center with a brand new plaza, entries and interiors. The construction will be done in conjunction with the building of Portland's first convention hotel, a \$244 million Hyatt Regency Portland, slated to open across the street from the convention center in 2019. (See related story, page 3)

Pay Dirt for Colas

Raimore Construction, another black-owned construction firm from northeast Portland, will partner with Colas on the convention center remodel. Colas will serve as the project's construction manager.

"It was definitely one of the most exciting days of my construction career," said company executive and spokesman

Andrew Colas, about winning the Metro contract last Aug. 31.

Colas grew up learning the business from his father, Herman Colas, originally from Haiti, who started the company in 1997.

"To just see, you know, that culmination of being a little kid walking around the city with my father, looking at all the Hoff-

man tower cranes, my dad always telling me that they were our competition. I'm just really proud to have been given the opportunity to work on such an iconic building," Colas told the Portland Observer.

"My dad's the hardest working person I've ever met. And just seeing that work ethic that he practiced, but then instilled in me, it's just so critical to being able to be successful as a business person," Colas added.

He recalled his own interest in construction began at an early age.

"Any project I went by I wanted to look at it, I wanted to study it, I wanted to understand how it worked," he said. "I always followed the plans, but I always felt like I could build, you know, something even better."

The Oregon Convention Center's original construction was wrought with razing housing in a historic black neighborhood and garnered criticism from activist groups like the Coalition of Black Men for not

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