

Mayor

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and a diverse citizenry of 589,000 people. And while Portland has countless strengths, our city also faces serious challenges as we weather the storm of what's become known as the "Great Recession".

Portland's official unemployment rate stands at 10 percent overall. And as the Urban League's State of Black Oregon report and Portland State's Communities of Color report documented, those rates are far higher for Portland's African American community.

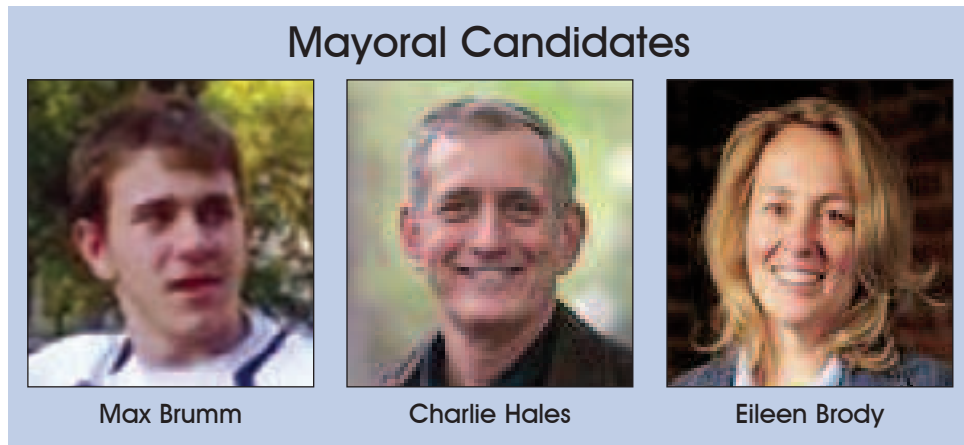
The Skanner News asked Brady, Hales and Max Brumm to identify the major challenges facing the next mayor of Portland.

Both Brady and Hales identified jobs as their number one priority.

"My number one focus is the economic vibrancy and jobs for the city," Brady said. "Without that underlying prosperity we won't be able to pay for the good school system that we need and all of the social services that support our city. That's the fire in my belly."

"Maybe our city is in good shape, but our people are not," Hales told The Skanner. "We have a lot of people out of work and we are not building jobs fast enough."

Brady said parents she met at the Black



Parent Initiative spoke to her about the need for stable family-wage jobs. "They said, 'If you as mayor go out to recruit companies to Portland, can you please recruit companies that actually have jobs for people here – as opposed to recruiting companies that then have to turn around and recruit people to come and work for them,'" she said.

"So I will be aware of the skill base that this city has to offer and be mindful of helping the people here develop a meaningful career and a stable income through family wage

jobs."

Hales said creating jobs means supporting existing small businesses as well as new businesses. "Ninety percent of job growth is generated by small businesses," he said. "So we need to create a climate where small bBrady and Hales both identified increasing support for small business as a vital strategy.

Hales says, if he becomes mayor, he will concentrate on improving the climate for existing small businesses, specifically, "Everything from working on the permit-

ting process and streamlining it, to making sure the transportation system works for everyone, to building incentives for people to grow businesses here. If the city does its job well and focuses on core services then I think businesses notice."

Brady said many people want to start their own businesses and the city should do more to help. "We have a wonderful entrepreneurial spirit here in Portland. Being an entrepreneur takes a certain kind of person, but if you're that kind of person it's well worth it," Brady said. "But it's hard to figure out how to get started: How do you get a bank loan? How do you negotiate the permitting process at the City? How do you set up your board of directors?"

Brumm said he wants to see better communication and coordination between city bureaus, which he says is the basis for a more efficient use of city funds. "City bureaus need to be able to talk to each other and work together as a whole," he said.

Brumm identified mismanagement of funds at city hall as his number one priority. He pointed to the recent controversy over the water and sewer budget.

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Avenue

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tear-down of more than 450 homes and businesses.

It was also the year federal officials approved highway construction funds that would pave Interstates 5 and 99 right through hundreds of homes and storefronts, destroying more than 1,100 housing units in South Albina.

By 1962, the PDC's "Central Albina Study" earmarked the area as "beyond rehabilitation." The city document "History of Portland's African American Community (1805-to the Present)."

"Clearly, urban renewal, largely clearance, appears to be the only solution to, not only blight that presently exists in central Albina, but also to avoid the spread of that blight to other surrounding areas."

The Polk's Guide for that year shows scores of vacant properties along North Williams.

When it came time for local officials to win grant funds from the federal government to expand Emanuel Hospital, the 1966 grant application read, in part: "There is little doubt that the greatest concentration of Portland's urban blight can be found in the Albina area encompassing the Emanuel Hospital. This area contains the highest concentration of low-income families and experiences the highest incidence rate of crime in the City of Portland. Approximately 75 percent to 80 percent of Portland's Negro population live within the

area. The area contains a high percentage of substandard housing and a high rate of unemployment."

Portland won the grant, and demolition of buildings began in the late 1960s. Within a few years the federal money ran out for Emanuel Hospital expansion – after the demolition was complete.

Cause and Effect

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tained by its owners.

In her ground-breaking study, "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000," Portland State Urban Studies Adjunct Professor Karen J. Gibson detailed how municipal development policies, coupled with racism in the real estate and banking industries, left Portland's Black community segregated, ghettoized and, finally, scattered. And the same thing happened all over the country.

"In cities across the nation, urban power brokers, with the help of the federal government, eagerly engaged in central-city revitalization after World War II," Gibson wrote in "Bleeding Albina." "Luxury apartments, convention centers, sports arenas, hospitals, universities, and freeways were the land uses that reclaimed space occupied by relatively powerless residents in central cities, whether in immigrant White ethnic, Black, or skid row neighborhoods."

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The study includes quotes from oral histories gathered decades earlier about the region's history.

"Oregon was a Klan state—it was as prejudiced as South Carolina, so there was very little difference other than geographic difference," said early civil rights leader Otto Rutherford, in 1978.

Gibson says her historical research uncovered a memo penned by a PDC official reas-

suring the federal Housing and Urban Development department about racial concerns in tearing out the homes and businesses for Emanuel Hospital expansion in the early 70s.

"The whole transition has been racial," Gibson told The Skanner News this week. "People paid taxes in Albina – what did they get for their taxes?"

In 1956 area banks could legally deny loans to any Black customer who applied, making the NAACP Credit Union — one of North Williams' lost storefronts – a particularly poignant marker.

"Race was used, and the stagnation and redlining was racially based," Gibson said.

"The whole thing has to do with race, and it has to do with real estate.

"White privilege means something – it means a difference in wealth and the fact that you could just come in and take over the boulevard," Gibson said.

Gibson says anyone weighing in on the current citizens' advisory process for North Williams Avenue transportation safety should read the 1993 Albina Community Plan drafted under the leadership of then-Portland Planning Bureau Commissioner-in-charge Charlie Hales, who is now running for mayor.

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Who

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this, but the problem is that there's no dialogue.

"Our inability to have these dialogues is killing us."

He points to the rise of hate groups and open racism, at the same time the country is led by its first Black president. "What we are seeing now is what used to be hidden," he says. "It is very blatant. People are not hiding their 'isms.'"

The Director of Community and Diversity at Oregon State University since 2004, Ross is also the founder of the diversity and social justice website Mosaic Nation. Now

he plans to leave university life and concentrate on his diversity work. Oregon has a long way to go when it comes to race and diversity issues, Ross said.

"There's a reason people of color are leaving Oregon. Oregon hasn't moved fast enough – right now in this state diversity is a tomorrow issue. I want to be somewhere where it is a today issue."

People of color also need to rethink some of their outdated thinking habits, he said. "We are very easily divided. The Latino community and the Black community in Oregon are looking at almost identical edu-

cation statistics. How come the Black and Latino community don't lobby together? They would double their powers.

"And in Oregon, Asian Americans face the same challenges – that's a reverse on the national picture. We know this from the Communities of Color report. So how come these three groups don't advocate together?"

"It's only our fault if you and I don't work together. There's nobody else to blame."

Ross will weave in knowledge he's gained from other sources, such as the Brookings Institute report on Metropolitan America and the Human Development report from

the Social Services Research Council.

Sponsored by the National Forum of Black Public Administrators and Diverse Empowered Employees of Portland, the presentation is part of a series of discussions Ross developed through his work on American diversity. He says he will finish writing his book, also titled, 'The Changing Face of America' during the next 6 months. Look to see it in bookstores next year.

Presentation: The Changing Face of America with Dr. Terryl Ross 11:30 am to 1 pm Aug.16, Pettygrove Room, Portland City Hall.