

Housing

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variety of reasons. The value of the properties is sometimes greatly depleted.” For example, he says, “One property that’s not in our inventory but has potential to come into our inventory, has city liens for well over \$100,000 and to date owes \$12,000 in taxes.” The city drops its liens when the properties are donated. Disability nonprofit Com-

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munity Vision takes possession, rehabilitates the property and makes sure the residents are housed. Most move to alternative housing. But under the agreement, the property must be kept as affordable housing for at least 30 years. “Once the home is sold it goes back on the tax roll and they return at a much higher tax rate,” Walruff says. “So when all that is totaled, there’s a much greater benefit to donate the property.” Walruff stresses that the donations are not a program, but just a better choice in the small number of cases where people with disabilities are still living in the foreclosed property. So how did Johnson’s home on Northeast

Jessup Street end up in foreclosure? Built in 1960 with insurance money that came from a road accident that killed Johnson’s grandfather, Arthur Cox, and injured his grandmother Etolia Cox, Johnson’s mother inherited the home. But by 2006, she had lost her sight and become mentally disabled. A payee appointed to manage her finances stole her disability checks, drained her bank account, and sold off a second family home, putting the proceeds – \$145,000 – into her own pocket. The thief was prosecuted and convicted of embezzlement, but the family couldn’t recover the money. Johnson was left to deal with a huge tax bill and a mountain of repairs. “I was in Salem at the time at the blind school,” Johnson said. “I was learning Braille and how to cope with being blind.” Unable to continue his work as an accountant, Johnson sank \$13,000 — his entire savings — into paying off part of the unpaid tax bill. He also tried to make repairs. But the bills kept mounting. In August 2010, Multnomah County finally foreclosed. “I was so upset I didn’t even go down there, so I just prayed and asked God for help,” he says. “I’d done all I could do.” Help came in the form of Portland Disability Commissioner Amy Anderson, who knew Johnson’s story. She spoke to county commissioners, and they decided the home

Safety Net Campaign Launch



Community housing activists last week re-launched the “Safety Net” campaign to persuade Portland City Council to save funding for an array of programs that help local residents at every point in the housing system. Here, the vendor staff of Street Roots newspaper kicked off the 2013 effort, which last year included people from all walks of life circulating snapshots of themselves holding up the signature sign that reads, “I support the Portland Safety Net.” For more information on the Safety Net campaign, go to www.wearethesafetynet.org.

should become one of the handful of properties donated to Community Vision. The nonprofit helps people with disabilities live independently, work and find affordable housing. It also works to help people with disabilities build financial stability and buy homes – long out of reach for most people facing these challenges. Using donated materials and volunteer labor, the nonprofit restores or rebuilds the

donated properties. Today thanks to the program, Nicholas Johnson and his ailing mother – he takes care of her — are still able to live in their family home. And the nonprofit is working with Johnson to build financial security. “The goal is to buy the home back,” Johnson says. “That’s the goal.” For more info on Community Vision, go to www.cvission.org.

Health

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the program is to improve what the health-care community terms “Triple Aim.” This refers to reducing the per capita cost of healthcare, improving quality and improving patients’ experiences so they feel included, have their needs met and feel that the service is culturally responsive. “We focus so much of our care on the healthcare system, on hospitals and clinics and specialists, and not on how people are faring out in the world in their daily lives,” says Solotaroff. “I think this idea of I-CAN being out there in the community and actually working with folks and not just being inside a clinic, it really leverages our

ability to be able to get better information and best care coordination for people, taking into account their environment and really meeting them where they are.” I-CAN will be focused in Old Town for its first year of operation. The program will

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branch out to Southern Oregon’s west Medford neighborhoods during its second year and come to SE Portland for its third year. The SE Portland I-CAN will focus on immigrants and refugees. According to project manager Launa Mathews, if an individual or family wants to utilize I-CAN, they need to get a referral from one of the program’s collaborative academic partners. In the case of Old Town, these institutions are Macdonald Center, Neighborhood House and Central City Concern in downtown Portland. Mathews encourages

those who live outside of this area but know someone that might be interested to pass the information along. Students at these institutions will be providing services like health evaluations and screenings. During this process, people interested in I-CAN can inform the students on what they feel is their most primary concern and then determine if the organization’s plan is a good match. Mathews says it will be a shared learning process. “Our intent is we’ll learn things from working with them that will be useful to benefitting a larger population,” she says. “We’re hoping to learn as we benefit the individuals that are referred and they benefit us.”

Perez

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“While our investigation has revealed that inadequate systems of supervision and oversight and the absence of specialized training have permitted particular use of force violations to persist at the Portland Police Bureau, we are confident that the steps already taken and those contained in our tentative agreement will provide meaningful and sustainable reform,” he said in September. In choosing Perez, the son of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Obama would be nominating his first second-term Latino Cabinet member. Perez, a lawyer with a degree from Harvard Law School, would replace Hilda Solis, a former California congresswoman and the nation’s first Hispanic labor secretary. He has strong support from Latino and labor groups, but could face opposition from Republicans who say his tenure at Jus-

tice has been guided too much by political ideology. If confirmed by the Senate, Perez, who has been head of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division since 2009, would take over the Labor Department as Obama undertakes several worker-oriented initiatives, including an overhaul of immigration laws and an increase in the minimum wage. Before taking the job as assistant attorney general, the 51-year-old Perez was secretary of Maryland’s Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, which enforces state consumer rights, workplace safety and wage and hour laws. Perez’s nomination has been expected for weeks, and comes with vigorous support from labor unions and Latino and civil

rights groups. Among those at the White House ceremony Monday were AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, and Benjamin Jealous, the president of the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. “At a time when our politics tilts so heavily toward corporations and the very wealthy, our country needs leaders like Tom Perez to champion the cause of ordinary

working people,” Trumka said in a statement. At the Justice Department, Perez has played a leading role in the agency’s decision to challenge voter ID laws in Texas and South Carolina that could restrict minority voting rights. A federal court later struck down the Texas law and delayed implementation of the law in South Carolina until after the 2012 election. Perez also has Republican congressional critics who can be expected to oppose his confirmation, such as Sen. Jeff Sessions, who called the nomination “unfortunate and needlessly divisive.”

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