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East PDX Parks Problem

City, activists take on
challenge of creating
more greenspaces

Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

Trees. Parks. Playgrounds. Some neighborhoods have them. Others don't. Take East Portland. Home to 40 percent of the city's children and teens, many neighborhoods east of NE 82nd Avenue simply don't have enough safe places to exercise, play and enjoy the outdoors.

Parks matter for many reasons. They're important to our physical and mental health. They give us beautiful places to play, walk, picnic and hold community gatherings. They help keep cities cool in hot weather. They soak up storm water, which prevents flooding. And their trees pump out oxygen, improving our air quality.

The Parks bureau owns more than a dozen sites in East Portland and has created master plans for seven of them. But it's unclear how building out those plans will be funded. Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who recently took over the parks portfolio, is weighing her options.

Meanwhile, environmental justice non-profit Groundwork Portland is working with East Portland neighbors through the East Portland Action Plan's brownfields subcommittee, to turn unused lots into community green spaces and gathering places. Brownfields are vacant city lots that present a challenge for development because they are polluted or contain other potential hazards.

"Our challenge is that we are competing with the development market, especially with privately owned sites," says Cassie Cohen, executive director for Groundwork Portland. "We're asking property owners to slow down a bit and not just take the highest bid. So we let owners know that we will test the property to determine whether it is contaminated. And if it is contaminated we'll help pay for cleanup. We encourage them to become the stewards of the land, and leave a legacy that benefits everyone in the local community in the long run."

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TRAYVON MARCH



Fred Bryant, father of Keaton Otis, who was shot by Portland police after being pulled over for a traffic infraction, spoke at Saturday's rally. Community organizer JoAnn Hardesty asked the group to "surround him with love," for having the courage to come forward with Keaton's story and to speak out about racial profiling.

Third Protest Held Over Killing

Event melds community outrage, support for violence victims

About 250 people rallied Saturday in support of Trayvon Martin's parents, to protest the verdict and to demand action for civil rights.

This was the third rally to be held in Portland, Ore., to protest the acquittal of George Zimmerman, in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, in Sanford Florida.

Portland was one of a hundred cities that turned out Saturday in response to a call from Rev. Al Sharpton. Two

other rallies were held last weekend in Peninsula Park in North Portland—the first Saturday evening immediately after the rally; the second on Sunday, which attracted a big crowd.

This Saturday the march was peaceful, but energetic with upbeat clapping and chants being picked up by the crowd.

"Hey Hey, Ho Ho racial profiling has got to go," was just one. JoAnn Hardesty, one of the organizers of the event and a founding member of the

Campaign Against the New Jim Crow, rallied the crowd.

Fred Bryant, father of Keaton Otis, who was shot by Portland police after being pulled over for a traffic infraction, also spoke.

Hardesty asked the group to "surround him with love," for having the courage to come forward with Keaton's story and to speak out about racial profiling.

Other speakers included: Rev. Dr. Leroy Haines, Jamie Partridge, and many more.

President Obama's speech on racial profiling was welcomed as the beginning of a movement to demand attention to civil rights issues, particularly in the justice system. Speakers urged those present to remember Trayvon Martin through sending support to, working to racial profiling and statistics, such as the high poverty rates in communities of color.

A candlelight vigil also was planned for Unthank Park at 9 p.m. last Saturday.

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State Medical System on a Rocky Road

Health care expansion will force providers to grow their services

By Jonathan J. Cooper
The Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — With 400,000 uninsured Oregonians expected to get health insurance in the coming years, the state and medical community are scrambling to make sure there are doctors, nurses and other health care providers available to treat them.

Many of Oregon's rural and minority communities already are short of the recommended doctor-patient ratios — a problem that will only get worse when most Americans are required to have health coverage beginning Jan. 1.

With an eye on the coming tide of newly insured residents, state lawmakers this year approved scholarships and loan repayment programs designed to encourage medical

school graduates to practice in underserved areas instead of the flashier urban centers. State officials also hope Oregon's effort to improve coordination and preventive care will make it easier for the existing providers to handle more patients.

But there will still be growing pains.

"It's going to be difficult to go from where

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