Munjoy Observer

Portland Renewal Authority

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Editorially Speaking

That House Next Door

PRA often hears the complaint that empty buildings or buildings in poor condition are destroying an abutting property owner’s value. Owners don’t see any reason to start rehabilitation until the wreck of a building next door is demolished or rehabilitated. Nothing would be accomplished if everyone waited for someone else to make the first move. PRA is doing something about every building in Munjoy South! Steps have been taken to either condemn structurally unsound buildings and demolish them or to persuade compliance with Portland’s Housing Code.

Unfortunately, PRA only works in defined urban renewal areas. Any building outside the area of PRA’s responsibility is the problem of the community-at-large. Right across from PRA’s office at 200 Congress Street is a very dilapidated structure. A disgrace! This building is beyond any rehabilitation possibilities. The Housing Division of the City of Portland has a long list of such problem structures scattered throughout the city. Something is being done about this problem by the City Council which sometimes orders these structures demolished. New provisions of the Housing Act may make it possible for cities throughout the United States to receive federal money to help rid such problem structures when other methods have failed. An active and substantial code enforcement program throughout the city is one of the requirements before any federal money will be allocated to a city.

At this time over $200,000 has been spent by property owners in Munjoy South to improve their properties. In general, PRA finds that the major problem can be reduced to a question of financial scheduling, i.e., some people need help in budgeting their improvements. In many instances a better improvement package can be worked out for the homeowner by one of PRA’s rehabilitation specialists.

The system PRA uses to make the rehabilitation program successful is no mystery. After the first inspection by a staff member of Portland’s Housing Division the deficiencies found are reported to the owner for correction.

The rehabilitation program has been established as a five-year program. A little more than halfway through the program now PRA can look forward to a speedy close to the program in Munjoy South because 70 per cent of the structures in Munjoy South are now standard. The active cooperation of residents in (Continued on Page 2, Col. 3)
Relocation Adjustment Payments

PRA Relocation Staff reports that approximately 125 persons have contacted PRA concerning the new relocation adjustment payments following notification by letter that they may be eligible under the new program. PRA has found that approximately 90 per cent of the relocated families are eligible for payments. First checks will be mailed shortly.

Mr. William Cassidy who is handling the relocation adjustment payments for PRA said that the response to the new relocation adjustment payments has been most encouraging.

The new payment plan will affect families, elderly individuals (over age 62) who are not a family member, and small businesses displaced from the project on or after January 27, 1964. Relocation payment to residents and businesses displaced by PRA prior to the January, 1964, date had been limited to reimbursement for moving expenses and any actual direct loss of property.

In addition to the above programs the adjustment payments add a dollar amount available to elderly individuals and families of up to $500, and for small businesses of $1,500. Payment cannot be made unless the family or elderly individual has moved to a decent, safe and sanitary dwelling — and families and elderly individuals are not able to secure low-rent public housing.

Mr. Cassidy said that at least 12 of those persons who might have been eligible for payment are presently living in housing which is substandard; that is, the apartment does not meet Portland’s Housing Code. No payment can be made unless the family or elderly individual has moved to a decent, safe and sanitary dwelling — and families and elderly individuals are not able to secure low-rent public housing.

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Howard U. Heller, Executive Director of PRA said that when a report

Urban Design

Indifference and apathy by public officials, architects, planners, public interest groups, and news media were cited recently by Urban Renewal Commissioner William L. Slayton as being in part responsible for the lack of good urban design in the United States.

“Good urban design cannot be produced without a good client,” stated Commissioner Slayton before a meeting of architectural and planning students at the University of Virginia. (Continued on Page 4, Col. 1)

That House (Continued from Page 1, Col. 3)

making this program successful has been noted by members of the New York Office of URA. New legislation to assist owners willing to fix up their property but short of the cash to do the job is to be implemented shortly.

Mr. Howard U. Heller, Executive Director of PRA recently said that the New York Office of URA has appointed Mr. Jack Iwashita to coordinate the program, and to advise the local LPA to the procedure for these low-interest loans and outright grants. The New York Office has informed Mr. Heller that it would like to use Portland as one of the first cities to implement the new rehabilitation program. The reason Portland has been selected is that the URA finds that the Munjoy South rehabilitation program is progressing better than many others.

Every month the PRA rehabilitation staff reviews and/or reinspects every property that has not become standard. Each property is studied in depth by the PRA staff, and a decision is reached as to what should be done next to realize the necessary improvements. Occasionally, PRA decides to wait it out. In many cases PRA staff decides to continue to offer assistance and to try to prod the owner to make the improvements. In some instances PRA requests the Housing Division to issue legal orders to the owner notifying him that he has 30 days to make the improvements or face possible court action under Portland’s Housing Code. The owner can be fined by the court since the refusal to comply is a violation of a Municipal Ordinance and a fine is provided by law.

It must be stressed that before legal action is taken full consideration of the personal and financial problems of the homeowner is given. At a recent PRA staff meeting a house had not been repaired and the housing inspector said that the owner argued that he didn’t see why he should fix up his place with a piece of junk property next door. It was agreed that outside repair would be much easier and more practical after the offending house was removed. When the dilapidated property is removed PRA will demand that the abutting property owner comply with the housing code. In many cases there is no need to wait for a scheduled demolition next door.

Looking at homes from the outside does not always reveal whether or not improvements are going on. Many families schedule their improvements under this new program.

LATE NEWS ITEM

Reverend Perley C. Odell is leaving the Congress Street Methodist Church for a position in Westbrook. Mr. Edward Penderson has been appointed as Pastor of the church. More information in the next issue of the Munjoy Observer.

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That House
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may be installed as much as a year before the outside of the house is painted. Ability to finance improvements varies so considerably among home owners that we naturally expect the rate of rehabilitation to vary accordingly.

There are no hard and fast rules for implementation of a rehabilitation program. What works in one situation may fail in another case. Flexibility and understanding must be balanced in all instances. Neighbors need to show some of this understanding of the other fellow's problems.

As the rehabilitation program progresses more and more people realize the massive changes that have occurred in their neighborhood. Rehabilitation becomes contagious. Property values increase. The neighborhood begins to understand what it looked like before, and what its potential can be through an all out rehabilitation effort. In the final analysis a better and more livable area develops when public and private citizens join hands in rebuilding for now and for the future.

Munjoy Hill P.T.A.

The first meeting of the fall term of the Munjoy Hill P.T.A. was held on October 5 at Marada Adams School. The members decided on having the annual fair in April, and to sponsor Cub Scout Pack #12.

Mr. Leroy Ahlquist, Area Principal, Area No. 2, explained that pupil placement system used by the schools in Area No. 2: Emerson, Shailer and Marada Adams. Mr. Ahlquist also discussed report cards, and how to interpret them correctly. He said that teacher conferences will be arranged for parents of kindergarten pupils. This group will receive a report card at the end of the kindergarten year. During the school year pupil achievement will be discussed at these teacher conferences, or by other arrangement with the area principal.

The next meeting of the Munjoy Hill P.T.A. will be held on Wednesday, November 3 at 8:00 P.M. at Marada Adams School. The meeting will include a teachers' reception. This is an excellent chance for parents to meet these teachers. There will also be a food sale at this meeting so plan to bring a cake, pie, cookies, bread, or whatever your specialty may be.

Congress Street is being surfaced with bituminous concrete by the Public Works Department as part of the capital improvement program in Munjoy South. The old street car tracks are now covered, hiding the memory of a bygone day.

Street Repair
On Congress Street

As part of the capital improvement program in Munjoy South the boundary streets are to be resurfaced where necessary. This cost is shared between the City and the Federal Government. The City Public Works Department have almost completed repairs on Congress Street, Mr. George Cobb, Engineer Technician, reported recently.

Scheduled repairs at this time include a bituminous concrete base over the old trolley tracks, covering the ghost of a bygone day. The tracks on Morning Street were covered last Spring when the Contract 1 area was worked on by Romano Company. Previous repairs to water installations and gas had been made earlier, and a concrete base coat was applied. Not many people know it but under Morning Street and Congress Street is the main trunk line telephone cable to Montreal.

The upside-down conditions from Atlantic Street to Morning Street will be corrected by the time this paper reaches the public. The Public Works Department wishes to thank the residents and to apologize for the inconvenience to shoppers and others driving along Congress Street. The improvements will more than compensate for the inconvenience as this area has been in need of improvement for many years.

FOUND
A set of house keys and a set of car keys (General Motors). Call at the office at Marada Adams School.
Church Affiliation Survey To Be Made In November

Reverend John Martin, Pastor of the St. Lawrence Congregational Church on Congress Street announced that the Congregational Church is to make a survey of residents on the “Hill” to determine their church affiliation.

The survey is to take place during the month of November. Mr. Martin said that the last survey conducted in this area was made over ten years ago, and the current survey is to update the facts about church affiliation of residents of the “Hill”. The area to be surveyed on the North side of the “Hill” will include the entire area from North Street to the Eastern Promenade over to Walnut Street. All of Munjoy South will be surveyed, from the Eastern Promenade to Mountfort Street. There are over 2,000 families in this area and the survey will be made by teams of lay people who have volunteered to gather information for the church.

The survey will start Saturday, November 6 and Sunday, November 7, and will continue every Saturday and Sunday afternoon during the month of November. The survey teams will ask people their church affiliation. The questions will enable the Congregational Church to better serve its members and the community at large. An attractive booklet describing the services offered by the Congregational Church will be left with persons interviewed by the survey teams.

Church surveys help the church to meet the needs of the congregation, and serve the community better. Residents are asked to cooperate with the survey teams and to welcome them when they call during November.

Urban Design

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“Every physical improvement a city undertakes must be designed by someone, and must have a client — the official who makes the decision on what is to be built and how it shall be built.”

One solution to the public design problem, he suggested, is to break down the autonomy between various departments when it comes to selecting products for public improvements. The improvements should be designed for the urban space being created or enhanced, he said, to blend the function with the form of its setting.