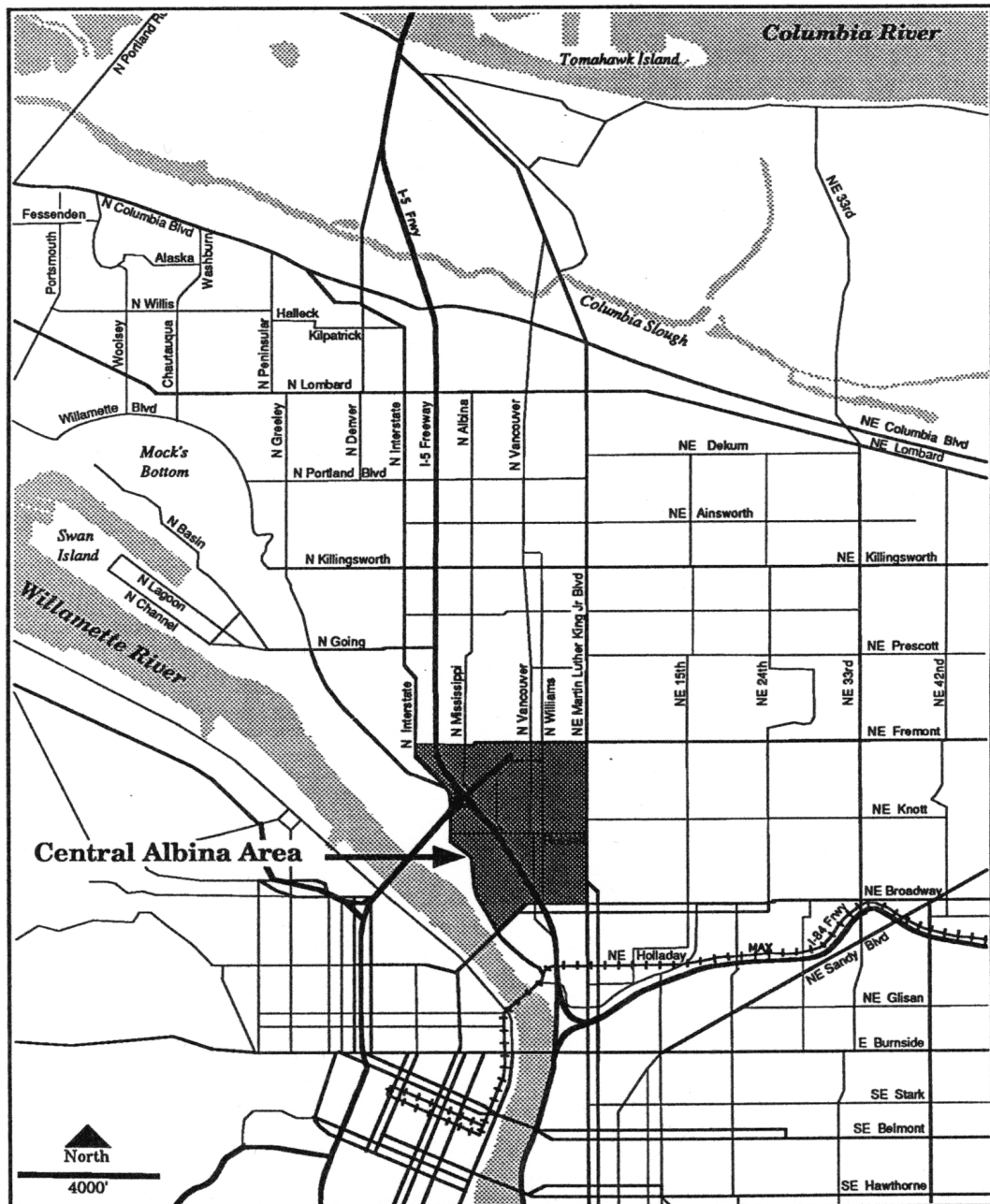


The Evolution of Civic Activism in the Albina Neighborhood

The story of public involvement in Albina provides a rich case example for developing a chronological understanding of the transformation of civic life in Portland that parallels in many ways the history of other poor and minority urban neighborhoods in America since the 1950s. Urban renewal is at the heart of the story, as Albina's geographical relationship to downtown and persistent problems of blight placed it in the middle of urban renewal efforts starting in the 1950s. The civic life of Albina was transformed through War on Poverty Programs in the 1960s and 1970s, economic revitalization efforts in the 1980s, and comprehensive neighborhood planning processes in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Traditional civic organizations played a significant role in Albina's civic life, but, new civic groups played the most pivotal roles. Traditional civic organizations lacked the capacity to provide leadership development or teach the civic skills needed in the community. It was through the process of new organizations hammering out public policy for the future of Albina that its citizens gained the knowledge and learned the civic skills they needed to share power and take control of their neighborhood. In effect, civic institutions, repertoires of civic actions, and democratic institutional relations were rebuilt from the ground up.

Figure 60: Northeast Portland in 1983



Source: Portland Bureau of Planning (1993).

Prior to the 1960s, there were only a few advocacy organizations in Albina, namely, the Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People (NAACP), and the Albina Neighborhood Council. In the late 1990s, by contrast, redevelopment efforts in Albina had involved over 150 organizations. As with the evolution of civic life in Portland in general during the past 40 years, Albina moved from having a skeletal civic infrastructure with few citizens involved in civic life to a rich one populated by thousands of citizens versed in public policy, and a broad range of civic organizations.

Albina was a separate incorporated city on the east side of the Willamette River, across from downtown Portland, from 1887 until it was consolidated with Portland in 1891. At the time Albina was a classic stopover neighborhood, where immigrants of various nationalities settled down and started businesses. A major railroad yard nearby along the east bank of the Willamette River provided jobs for the new arrivals.

The history of the Albina community might have been very different if not for World War II and the creation of Vanport, a planned community built and financed by Henry Kaiser for workers at the growing Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, the shipyards became the nation's largest producers of Liberty Ships. Kaiser ran help wanted ads in eleven states which encouraged both Black and White workers to emigrate from the East and South, a movement that pushed Portland's population up by 160,000 people. The recruitment effort brought together a diverse group of workers, about 25 percent of whom were Black. It is estimated that between 20,000 to 25,000 Blacks migrated to Portland between 1940 and 1950.

To contend with the in-migration of so many workers, the Housing Authority of Portland proposed building 4,900 apartment units and a dormitory in Albina. White residents of Albina objected to the plan, one of the earliest public involvement actions in

the area. A gathering of 500 Albina residents presented an alternative solution to the housing problem of Black workers.

“If it is necessary to bring in large numbers of Negro workers, locate them on the edge of the city,” urged the President of the Central East Portland Community Club. “It would be much better for all concerned. If they are allowed to fan out through the city it soon will be necessary to station a policeman on every corner (Abbott 1983, p. 129).”

Kaiser stepped in at this point with an alternative proposal, the construction of a massive housing project of at least 6,000 units north of Albina along the Columbia River. Vanport, built between 1942 and 1943, and eventually it became the largest wartime housing project in the United States. At its peak, the population reached 40,000.

Many shipyard workers remained in Portland after the war, including about 10,000 Blacks, many at Vanport. Since it was easier for Whites to relocate in other areas of the city, Vanport soon became, by Portland standards, a Black community, with a Black population of 35 percent.

In May 1948 a devastating flood destroyed Vanport’s housing and community facilities, and literally turned it into a lake. Approximately 17,000 people were made homeless by the Vanport flood, and Albina was chosen as the place to resettle them. By 1950, Blacks resided in all except one of Portland’s census tracts, but, half of them remained in Albina.

In the 1950s, several key events marked the history of Albina. At this time, Blacks were primarily concentrated in an area located just north of the Broadway and Steel bridges, in the proximity of a sports arena, the Memorial Coliseum. This area was

becoming highly vulnerable to development pressure because of its position relative to the growing downtown and nearby Lloyd commercial district. Several redevelopment projects targeted for inner north and northeast Portland in the late 1950s and early 1960s had devastating impacts on Portland's Black community. As much as any neighborhood in the city, the central Albina area, now called the Eliot neighborhood, suffered at the hand of urban renewal, or "Negro removal" as skeptics called it in the 1960s (Portland Bureau of Planning, 1993, p. 109).

By the late 1950s, outside pressures for redevelopment, along with deteriorating conditions within the community, led residents to begin to organize to resist another relocation. The organization that would prove to play a critical role in urban renewal efforts in Albina in the 1950s, the Albina Neighborhood Council, was founded in 1934. The Council was one of 15 neighborhood councils formed in Portland in the 1930s. The councils were promoted by the Community Chests and Councils of America to provide a grassroots base to the operation of Community Welfare Councils, the coordinating bodies for agencies that received Community Chest (or later United Good Neighbor) funding. The guiding principle of the councils was, "that neighborhood councils exist to foster cooperation and participation of the organized forces of the neighborhood in a program of child welfare (Neighborhood Councils, 1934, p. 3)." The special focus that originally promoted the development of the councils in Portland (and around the country) was the rapid rise in child delinquency. The types of groups the committee suggested should be represented on councils were: women's clubs, parent teachers associations, lodges, civic clubs, churches, schools, and neighborhood improvement leagues (Neighborhood Councils, 1934). For about 15 years, neighborhood councils were funded by the

Community Chest.

A 1948 survey of the local neighborhood councils revealed that the Albina Neighborhood Council was made up of 4 teachers or school administrators, 10 clergy, 4 caseworkers, 10 recreation and group workers, 1 health worker, and ten at-large members, for a total of 39 active members. In a meeting of the councils remaining in 1946, the secretary of the Council of Neighborhood Councils reflected that “lay people were no longer coming to the meetings, and the councils had become just paid representatives of neighborhood agencies” (Neighborhood Councils, 1946). By the mid-1950s, there were only five of the original councils remaining: Southwest, Northwest, North, Central Eastside, and Albina.

In 1959, the remaining councils held a meeting at which Albina Council representatives the Reverend Cortlandt Cambric, Eddit Harris, and Mary Rowland led a discussion about how the Albina area was “being hit on all sides, first the Lloyd addition, then the ER [proposed Exposition-Recreation facility] site and now the Eastbank freeway” (Neighborhood Councils, 1959). A primary concern was the inadequacy of relocation services. They felt that the Portland Development Commission, Portland’s newly formed redevelopment agency, and the mayor’s office had been fairly responsive to displacement issues, but that Federal funds restricted relocation services. The city could not spend Federal resources on relocation in the cases of proposed housing or development projects. Likewise with highway development projects proposed in the area, the Oregon State Highway Division did not have authorization to fund relocation services. At the end of the meeting, a Displacement and Relocation Committee was established with several other neighborhood council representatives as members. The

committee requested that the city support a central relocation office and support passage of a bill (Senate Bill 313) which would allow the State Highway Commission to help with relocation of displaced residents. (ONI Archives #5)

The Albina Neighborhood Council also turned to the Portland Development Commission (PDC) for assistance. When John Kenward, Executive Director of PDC, spoke at an Urban League workshop to discuss the future of the Albina neighborhood, Council representatives expressed interest in obtaining assistance from PDC to explore the possibility of obtaining funds from the Federal government for an urban renewal conservation and rehabilitation program (Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project, 1961).

In October, 1960, the Reverend Cortlandt Cambric was made chairman of the 18-member Neighborhood Improvement Committee (ANIC) to work with PDC on developing a grant application to carry out Albina's first urban renewal efforts. In November, the committee held a public meeting at the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, attended by 500 people, to announce the new project. The committee surveyed over 300 homes in the area to see if they would participate in the program, one that might include Federal Housing Administration (FHA) home improvement loans if the area became an urban renewal project. The grant application was submitted to the Housing and Home Finance Agency in August of 1961, and approved in October of that year (Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee, 1961a).

This first urban renewal activity in Albina was very grassroots in nature. The Albina Neighborhood Council itself was still active, although its leadership was caught up in the activities of the ANIC. The council's membership roster listed 45

representatives from a variety of organizations, including churches, schools, PTA groups, city agencies, and other neighborhood and community organizations (Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee, 1962). The Eighteen member ANIC committee were all local residents, including representatives from the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Federated Women's Clubs, Urban League, Principals of Eliot and Humboldt Schools, and eight property owners in the area. At the regular meetings, there were also representatives of the local Girl Scout troop (which planted flowers as a community project in Albina), Portland Police, Portland Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Youth Commission, and the NAACP.

In October 1961, with funding from the Portland Development Commission, the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Center was established to assist Albina residents in obtaining benefits from the new program. The Center initially had four full-time staff members.

The Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee began to function as a more general purpose neighborhood association. For example, at a regular meeting in 1961, they reviewed the conditional zoning change petition of the Brunswick Corporation for a proposed bowling alley. Not wanting to speak for the neighborhood, the committee deferred approval of the project until they could survey the residents themselves. In other ways, even though ANIC itself had specific and limited projects to carry out under the federal grant, citizens, nonprofit organizations, and agency staff began to use it as a platform for Albina issues in general. Citizens expressed their worries about the coming freeway bridge (what would be the Fremont Bridge) to be built across the Willamette River that would land on the eastside in Albina. School administrators came to discuss

the importance of school levees, and the Metropolitan Youth Commission came to talk with the members about youth issues (Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee, 1961b).

ANIC's work in Albina seemed to be moving the community in a positive direction, helping residents hold their homes and stem the tide of displacement. However, there were other forces at work as well. Displacement was a way of life for Blacks. Over 150 persons were moved to make room for the Memorial Coliseum, and another 300 were moved to make room for the East Bank-Minnesota Freeway. As the right-of-way supervisor for the State Highway Commission noted about relocation (as much noting their familiarity with being displaced as their human nature), "We have less trouble with Negroes than with any other class of people (Lattie, 1963)."

In December 1962, the City Planning Commission submitted the Central Albina Study as part of Portland's Comprehensive Development Plan. The plan focused on an area of about 300 acres south of ANIC's target area, home to 7,000 persons, about 70 percent of them Blacks. The report concluded that the "Central Albina area bears most of the characteristics of a district in an advanced state of urban blight." Once again, Albina residents faced a "Negro removal" project proposal. If the city were to apply for urban renewal money from the Federal government, it would be for clearance and removal. The only other urban renewal project to date, the South Auditorium project, at the south end of downtown on the other side of the river, had forced the displacement of about 1600 people. This proposed displacement was 4-5 times as extensive as that and involved a single class, Blacks.

It was clear that while PDC and other agencies of the city were pleased with the

progress of the citizen-based effort led by ANIC, they did not believe the same policies and actions could be applied fruitfully to all areas, such as the area the Central Albina Plan had designated as “blighted.” Land in the more blighted area of Albina was in demand for industrial and commercial use for the expanding downtown office district, by light industry, for warehousing, and by expanding institutions such as hospitals, the state university, and shopping centers (Portland Planning Bureau ,1993).

As Abbott points out, at this point in Portland’s history, planning followed traditional lines of thought about the progression of inner city blight and replacement rather than conservation and rehabilitation. Neighborhoods in the inner city inevitably declined, the “end product of a long slow process of erosion.” Also, as he notes, “Planning agencies ignored the opinions of Northeast Portland citizens in their treatment of the heart of Albina south of Fremont (Abbott ,1983, p. 186).” When residents requested that the ANIC Improvement District be expanded to include the “blighted” area, the request was denied.

In 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was created by Congress to lead the charge of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. In Albina, both the Albina Neighborhood Council and the Community Council (previously, the Community Welfare Council) conducted an inventory and survey of agencies in the Northeast in order to develop a single proposal from Albina to secure OEO funding. In October 1964, a neighborhood service center for Albina was proposed, and an Albina Community Action Plan drawn up. The action plan was submitted to the Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee, Portland’s newly formed overall coordinating body for OEO actions. In February 1965, the Albina group, referring to itself as the Albina Citizens War on

Poverty Committee (ACWPC), was recognized as the official representative for OEO programs in Albina (Portland Planning Bureau, 1993).

The formation of the ACWPC, under the guidance of the Community Council, followed an inter-agency track to develop the Albina plan to combat poverty. The members of the original group were for the most part agency representatives, not lay citizens. It was expected that each participating agency would submit its own ideas and needs that would be consolidated into one overall application to the Federal OEO office. There were several well established agencies involved, including: the Greater Council of Churches, YMCA, YWCA, Albina Neighborhood Council, and the Portland Housing Authority (Gerald A. Frey, personal communication, November 11, 1964).

OEO's now well-known guidelines for developing local civic infrastructures to carry out the war on poverty stated that the local plans were to be "developed and conducted with the maximum feasible participation of residents in the area (Economic Opportunity Act). However, the plan originally adopted by the ACWPC was mostly developed by the interagency group established by the Community Council. In establishing the first official board of directors, ten members were a part of the original committee, representing agencies, ten members were elected as representatives who lived in the target area, and ten more members were elected from across the city to bring experience and expertise to the board. Five member slots were left open in order to potentially increase the residential representation (Gerald A. Frey, personal communication, November 11, 1964).

The development of a Neighborhood Service Center, later renamed as the Model Cities Multi-service Center, was the cornerstone of the OEO program in Albina. It

provided free legal service, family counseling service, a Planned Parenthood program, Urban League Job Development and Training Program, Housing Department, Community Services section, and vocational counselors (Portland Planning Bureau, 1993).

The new programs established in Albina as a result of successful application to the Federal Program did rely on local residents to serve on committees that guided policy and as staff to run the programs. While the application for start-up funds was an inter-agency creation, once the programs were initiated, the programs tended to operate in isolation from other agencies, guided by principles and program goals established through the federal funding (Jordan, 1977). As often was the case, the story of Albina changed as federal programs shifted. The Albina War on Poverty was phased out and replaced by the Model Cities Demonstration Project that took root in Albina with an application to the federal program in April 1967, which marked another stage of development.

The Albina Story: From War on Poverty to Early Signs of Gentrification

The War on Poverty and OEO programs were only the first of a series of activities that radically changed Albina's civic structure. The Albina War on Poverty was phased out and replaced by the Model Cities Demonstration Project that took root in Albina with an application to the federal program in April 1967. In this phase of the evolution of Albina's civic infrastructure, the definition of citizen participation was critical. As with the previous War on Poverty guiding principles, Model Cities guidelines called for participation by residents in the affected areas. The issue faced from the outset was to balance relationships with agencies and the implementation of a rational and comprehensive plan that relied more on traditional planning methods with the need to involve residents of the neighborhood.

In 1968, during one of the early meetings of the newly formed Citizen's Planning Board (the oversight committee that would coordinate Model City activities), Dean Gisvold, a committee member, offered an amendment to the Citizen's Planning Board by-laws. He stated, "any person shall have the right to be heard during any meeting of the board subject to the discretion of the chairman (West, 1970, p. 68)." The chairperson, E. M. J. Baskett, emphasized the principle behind this rule by saying, "I want this really understood. We want people to talk at these meetings. The name of the game is citizen participation." (West, 1970, p. 68) The emphasis on citizens participating would prove to be a very challenging endeavor, and made Portland's effort unique. By way of contrast, Seattle's application and formation of a community development agency (CDA) was

based more on inter-agency cooperation. The Seattle director of the effort viewed this as a strategic political move, arguing that it was necessary to build on the strengths of existing agencies and develop cooperation between them to exert power in poor neighborhoods (West, 1970).

Portland's original application for Model Cities Planning funds identified a series of problems in the proposed model neighborhood with respect to citizen participation: a lack of groups oriented toward participation, a lack of interest in planning or understanding of the area's problems among the existing groups, a lack of communication between groups interested in community improvement, and a lack of citizen involvement within the same organizations.

To remedy the situation, the applicants proposed a Citizen Participation Coordinating Committee made up of representatives of established groups in the area. These groups were to gather additional input from neighborhood residents through block organizations. In this plan, citizen participation was to be the result, not of efforts by the CDA, but of interest and commitment of resources on the part of the citizens themselves. In this plan, there was to be an oversight committee "made up of one, two or three key representatives from public and private organizations representing the broadest interests in the various fields of health, education, housing, manpower and economics, recreation and culture, crime reduction, social services and public assistance, and physical improvements and public facilities (West, 1970, p. 72)."

The application to the federal government was successful. However, it was returned with a harsh critique of the organizing structure, including substantial criticism about the involvement of local residents. The federal reviewers argued that Portland had

not done an adequate job of explaining how neighborhood people would have any influence over the lead board's decisions. It went on to say that "Portland's citizen participation proposal is mostly at the level of informing residents rather than involving them. It limits itself to design in structures without explaining the relationship of these structures to each other and to the entire planning process. The important aspects of training, financial assistance and technical assistance (to citizens) are not considered. The failure to consider the use of low-income citizen groups as avenues for implementing the program is a serious omission for a city that establishes for itself the goal of developing for each individual a full sense of participation...by not doing for him, but allowing him to do for himself (West, 1970, p. 74)."

The neighborhood leadership also voiced its opinion. On December 15, 1967, a delegation of Black leaders appeared at city council to request broader responsibility and greater control over the program. On the following Sunday, 500 people attended a meeting at which a sixteen member committee was established to review a citizen's proposal for the reorganization of the citizen participation structure of the Portland CDA. It recommended a new form of citizen participation that would not rely on traditional structures and specific leaders. The group's statement read, in part, "Resistance to traditional patterns of dealing with city hall through long-established neighborhood organizations, PTAs, churches and federal and local governmental agencies was expressed in the decisive defeat of a proposal to have the director of the Albina Neighborhood Service Center (OEO) be chairman and presidents of neighborhood improvement groups the nucleus of membership of a committee to work out citizen participation guidelines (West, 1970, p. 75)." Already, the recently established OEO

committee structure was regarded as establishment, and not representative. At the meeting, it was proposed that the open assembly election would be responsible for establishing a citizens governing board made up of elected residents and representatives from assembly committees, and that it would function as the CDA, having the right to approve all plans and policy. The proposed CDA was to be a free-standing nonprofit organization.

Other misgivings about the process surfaced in Albina. A rumor that the mayor was considering appointment of Rev. Paul Schulze, who was White, as director of the new CDA, brought up issues of race and representation. Schulze had been director of the Portland Council of Churches and director of community action programs in Albina, once again a member of the “old guard.” The mayor responded to demands that others be considered from the neighborhood, but when two of three persons recommended refused the position, the mayor fell back on Schulze. There were two neighborhood meetings held after the announcement of Schulze. At the first meeting, after considerable debate, his appointment was approved by those present, but, at a second meeting, the participants, in effect, asked for a recall by signing an agreement stating that, “all permanent appointments for positions of planning and coordination be rescinded until a duly elected citizens board representing the Albina target area approve (sic) such appointments and plans (West, 1970, p. 78).” The mayor responded by denying the recall, but also stating that he would consider more grassroots control. The appointment stood, and the next task was to create the governing committee now known as the Citizen’s Planning Board. As a compromise between the neighborhood and city hall, the Planning Board was given the power to veto decisions made by the mayor and city council, but

could not initiate decision-making processes. Residents had reversed the proposal in the original application and had achieved at least negative control over the substance and implementation of planning through their representatives on the Citizens Planning Board. West (1970) contends that it wasn't forethought on the part of leaders in regards to holding the plan to high levels of citizen participation, but rather a lack of resistance by other OEO organizations that led to the incoming director being a proponent of citizen participation.

On March 2, 1968, elections were held under the League of Women Voters supervision. The election was announced on television, radio, and in newspapers. Even a sound truck circulated through the neighborhood urging voters to cast ballots. Two candidates canvassed their district. By day's end, 1,781 residents out of a total of about 28,000, or 6.4 percent, voted. Of the 16 elected from the neighborhood, nine were Black. The mayor then appointed six Whites and five Blacks. The final composition of the board was described as: five unemployed women (two Black women from community organizations), a Black contractor, a White roofing contractor, two White bankers, two Black businessmen, two Black social workers, a Black deputy sheriff, a White lawyer, White printer, four clergymen (two Black), three elementary school teachers (two Black), a White educational administrator in a suburban school district, a Black housing director (in Albina), a Black job placement counselor at the Albina Neighborhood Center, and a White assistant commissioner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor. Twenty-three of the 27 were residents of the model neighborhood. Then the difficult work of the Citizen's Planning Board began in earnest. Although city hall faded to the background, the mayor and city council had the power to make final decisions in the process.

A key figure in the evolution of the citizen participation elements of the planning process was Tad Masaoka, the HUD agency liaison specialist for Portland, who operated out of HUD's San Francisco office. He emphasized the importance of the role of the Citizen's Planning Board in directing the program, and at the first formal meeting of the board, stated that they could "have the staff's head on a platter" (West, 1970, p. 88) if the staff did not perform well. West contended that Masaoka "was the only person connected with the program who saw clearly the extent to which its success depended upon the effective use of residents as a base of power."

This was easier said than done. Charles Jordan, who later served as director of the Model Cities Program, in an assessment of OEO programs, recalled this sudden provision of power to citizens who had not previously held positions of leadership as problematic (Jordan, 1977). The Planning Board established eight committees to develop different elements of the over-all Model Cities Plan. The committees lacked a knowledge of the planning process, were unclear about how they fit into the over-all process, and were harmed by factionalism and irregular attendance. The support staff for the CDA, under the new director, was relatively small and mostly made up of staff on loan from other agencies. Overall, there was also a lack of solid data on which to base the plans. The staff attempted to develop plans with direction from the committees, but underestimated how little they knew about the neighborhoods. In the end, committee-generated plans were based on anecdotal data and needs assessments, a process that would pass muster with the city's official planning bodies such as the Portland Development Commission. The situation was further compounded by the director's conflicting directives that stated staff should be both advocates of the citizens' desires and needs as well as negotiators between

agencies and citizens (West, 1970, p. 92).

The committees took different directions and had different types of problems. The Legal, Health and Social Services Committee began to rely more on agency relations and cared less about how lay citizens were involved. One of the most contentious arenas took place in the Housing and Physical Environmental Working Committee. Here, the issue of displacement and the continuing threat of urban clearance were brought to the table. The Institute for the Study and Solution of Community Problems from Eliot School, a grade school in central Albina, tried to gain approval for a ruling that would force PDC, or any agency, to have a high level of buy-in from neighborhood residents for proposed projects. This proposal precipitated heated discussions that nearly led to fist fights as Blacks argued that they did not want Whites moving into the neighborhoods after improvements had been made. Consequently, some White residents stopped participating in committee work (West, 1970, p. 131).

The underlying critical question for the committees was to what degree they had final authority. In the end, would the committee work stand on its own, and what would the relation be between the sub-committees and the oversight committee, the Citizen's Planning Board? In the final analysis, would completed work be evaluated and then approved or disapproved based on political or technical merit by the City Council or other agencies?

With a looming deadline for completion of an integrated comprehensive plan, the committee work was arduous and riddled with conflicts, lack of clarity as to roles, and a disorganized planning process. It was clear that the existing level of expertise of the CDA staff was insufficient to pull off completion of a plan before the pending deadline in

December. After several weeks of excruciating negotiations, Shultze was replaced by an outside consultant from Portland State University's Urban Studies Center, Kenneth Gervais. Through a round-the-clock effort, Gervais was able to complete a draft of the comprehensive plan by the deadline in December. To do so, Gervais took the work out of committees, relied on the Citizen's Planning Board for decision-making, and, in effect, moved the process from one of open assembly neighborhood involvement to a more rational planning process. A final plan was submitted to HUD in April of 1968.

This arduous and rancorous experiment in citizen participation in a poor area of town was unfolding against the backdrop of increased violence and rioting in American cities, with disenfranchised citizens taking messages of empowerment to the streets. Portland was not immune from civil unrest. While the Model Cities committees wrestled with developing a plan for revitalizing Albina, Black activists were taking to the streets. In July of 1967, a "riot" broke out in Irvington Park when the public was invited to see Eldridge Cleaver from Ramparts, the Black Arts theatre from San Francisco, and a SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) photo exhibit. Black youth were unhappy with community leadership, including leadership from northeast Portland. A delegation of youth at this time told Mayor Shunk that many of the "clergy had sold out to middle class standard" and lost touch with people on the street. The Society for New Action Politics (SNAP), during a public hearing, told City Council that: "Negroes serving on social agency and Office of Economic Opportunity boards in Albina are Uncle Toms. 'Uncle Tomism' seems to be running rampant over there right now." When Charles Jordan was flown in from California to be interviewed for the director of the new Model Cities program, Black Berets broke up an interview session, demanding that someone be

hired from the local neighborhood (Portland Planning Bureau ,1993, p. 127).

As in other communities across America during this period, more radical elements of the civil rights movement pushed the more gradualist agenda of the mainstream. In Portland, groups like SNAP, Black Panthers, the Black Education Center, the Fred Hampton Free Health Clinic, and the Oregon Black Caucus rattled the cages of the mainstream black community. In 1972, NAACP refused to send a delegate to the state-wide meeting of the Oregon Black Caucus because of the Caucus's separatist stand (NAACP, 1972).

Some older Black civic organizations were recycled to fit the times. In 1970, the OEO coordinating association of citizens, Albina Citizen's War on Poverty, was reconfigured as Albina Citizens Together, which continued as representative to the Portland Metropolitan Services Committee (PMSC), until PMSC's demise in 1977. By this time, the importance of representation of the Albina community in planning and service delivery was a foregone conclusion. All but one of the 37 members of the board were from North and Northeast Portland. The board make-up also reflected the growing leadership in Northeast Portland, as many of the local representatives were also representatives of social service programs, schools, and Black-owned businesses (Albina Citizens Together, 1970).

The Model Cities Program continued until 1974. In the five years of its operation, the program had spent \$18.4 million. There were some concrete outcomes, such as: the King Neighborhood Facility (still serving as a central office for several neighborhood programs), the Albina Health Care Center (defunct), the development of the Cascade Campus of Portland Community College, and the Albina Art Center (Portland Planning

Bureau, 1993, p. 133).

However, the physical outcomes only tell a part of the story. Charles Jordan, director of the Model Cities Program and later the city's first Black City Commissioner, reflected on the lessons and legacy of the OEO War on Poverty and Model Cities programs when, in 1977, Portland's city-wide coordinating body, the Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee, was dissolved. Jordan argued that the programs' laudable goals of involving residents of poor neighborhoods in determining their fate caused at least two difficulties. "For one thing," Jordan suggests, "the established agencies which served the poor, and which had largely failed to help them, were not drawn into the network of new agencies set up with OEO funds... These existing agencies should have either been incorporated into the new network of anti-poverty agencies, or dissolved. But they weren't, and the result was and is a wasteful duplication." The second difficulty was related to the relative inexperience of the new anti-poverty workers and agencies. "Suddenly, after years of exclusion, they were at the center of attention. They had to help plan new programs, run them, and evaluate the results. Yet the communities into which the funds were poured had little experience with such an undertaking (Jordan, 1977, p.4)."

In reflecting on the net results of initiatives from those days, Jordan alludes to programs that continued and then points to what he thought was the most enduring outcome. "Finally, the philosophy that citizens must participate in running the agencies which affect their destinies was spread and firmly implanted in the communities of the poor, as well as in the community as a whole. This means that there are leaders now who will consistently speak for the poor, leaders who won't be excluded from participation in

government decisions, or in other decisions which affect them. These leaders have come, and will continue to come, from among the poor themselves. This is the real and ultimate benefit which has come from the War on Poverty. The war itself has obviously not been won. But citizen participation by the poor is here to stay (Jordan, 1977).”

In a related appraisal of outcomes from this period, Darrell Millner, Director of Black Studies at Portland State University, noted that citizens in Albina had become more knowledgeable about the workings of city bureaucracy. In a forum piece in the Oregonian in 1976, he remarked that “many of those who stepped up the status ladder did so as a result of skills and professionalism gained by working in war on poverty programs” (Olmos, 1976).

In 1970, a key civic organization was formed, the Albina Ministerial Alliance. It surely wasn't the first entry of Black churches into civic life, but marked the emergence of a religious group that had both direct service and advocacy goals. The Albina Ministerial Alliance had its roots as the Union Minister's Fellowship which traced back to the 1930s. But in 1970, it was reorganized under the leadership of the Rev. John H. Jackson and began to play a more critical role in the social and political life of Albina. The Alliance stepped in several times to rescue or support social programs. For example, the Alliance took over the Head Start Program in 1977 when The Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee closed its doors. One of the characteristics of the Alliance was spelled out by the Rev. John Garlington, Jr., pastor of the Maranatha Church and Alliance President during the 1980s, when he said that he made no distinction between the social-action and religious aspects of the Alliance. This close relationship between religion and social action has remained a strong and unique characteristic of civic life in Albina

(Colby, 1984).

Albina might have been slowly winning the war, reversing the trend of disinvestment and displacement, but it still lost battles. In 1967, needing to expand, Emanuel Hospital announced it would be requesting federal assistance to expand its 19-acre hospital campus. The Portland Development Commission had kept the Emanuel Urban Renewal Project out of the Model Cities Planning process to assure the institution it would be able to expand its services (Abbott, 1983, p. 196). A grassroots organization, the Emanuel Hospital Displaced Persons Organization was formed to combat the development, and a battle ensued that included street demonstrations and political finagling, but, in the end, the land clearance for the hospital expansion resulted in the loss of 188 houses.

Portland's overall neighborhood public involvement system was evolving during this time. The neighborhood-based organizations in Albina created during the 1960s played a critical role in how the direct democratic venue of Portland's neighborhood system evolved. One of the earliest of the post 1960s' neighborhood associations in Portland was the Eliot neighborhood. The Eliot neighborhood had been the site of contentious dialogue during Model Cities committee work when the residents demanded to have more say-so over any plans for their neighborhood, especially any of those that might involve displacement (West, 1970, p. 132). The various organizations active in the Eliot neighborhood coalesced in 1971 to form the Eliot Neighborhood Association. Membership in the Neighborhood Association was open to all residents, with meetings being held regularly and association officers elected by the general membership. At this time, PDC paid a professional consultant to assist the residents in developing their plan, and a Neighborhood Development Office was established

to provide residents with information and services. Elements of the neighborhood plan were reviewed and approved by the neighborhood association, the Model Cities Physical Environment and Housing Working Committee as well as the Model Cities Citizen Planning Board (Citizen Planning Board, 1973). The creation of the Eliot Neighborhood Plan in 1973, a part of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Model Cities District, was one of several model community plans. It was a planning model that would be replicated both for its content and process, a collaborative effort between the city and neighborhood activists. In the eleven years since the first urban renewal plan, the City of Portland had developed a new civic planning process, the Albina neighborhood had a stable neighborhood association structure, and an indigenous civic leadership.

By 1977, by some accounts, things were looking up in Albina. An *Oregon Journal* piece from 1977 titled “Fix-up Fever Spreading” begins with this declaration: “With firebomb urban demolition a thing of the past, and more acceptable methods of neighborhood change picking up momentum, a new wave of optimism is sweeping Portland’s Albina territory.(Crick 1977, p. 9)” The article stated that lending institutions reported an increase in investment into the area, \$17 million into five ZIP code areas starting from N. Williams Avenue (although this area also included a part of Alameda to the east that was an upper-middle-class neighborhood). Looking to the future, Warren Chung, president of the Northeast Business Booster Association, boasted, “you haven’t seen anything yet” (Crick, 1977).

The period from 1978 to 1984 witnessed a turnover in civic organizations in Albina. Several older groups died out, including the Albina Action Center and Albina Arts Center. New groups such as the Black United Front and Albina Fair Share, as well

as the first community development corporations, were created during this period. The Black United Fund, modeled after a national foundation begun in 1974, was created to channel funds to projects focused in the Black community.

The other issue that gained significant attention during this period was political representation from the Black community. The BUF successfully lobbied to have minority representation on the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) and the Portland School Board. A coalition including the Black United Front, Albina Ministerial Alliance and the Citizen's Party, a chapter of a national political party movement, supported legislation at the state level intended to bring a focus on social and political issues of the Black community. In 1985, the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs, established in 1977 to improve the status of Blacks in Oregon, created a task force to investigate the state of Black representation on civic boards, commissions, and advisory groups in the City of Portland. By the mid-1980s, the group forced Mayor Bud Clark to survey all city commissions, boards, and committees to determine the representation of minorities, and subsequently to implement a more structured set of rules to assure minority representation (Henry, 1985).

By this time, the citizen involvement structure for the City of Portland was both maturing and breaking apart. On the one hand, there were rules and processes in place with which citizens, bureaucrats and elected officials were now accustomed. An increasing number of citizens had come up through the ranks, understood how the political system worked, and were now in effect a part of the system. There was a growing body of knowledge about effective citizen involvement, as well as a growing number of citizens who had developed these civic skills. Starting in 1983, Southeast

Uplift Neighborhood Program, the largest of Portland's neighborhood coalition offices, with support from the Oregon Community Foundation, sponsored an annual Leadership Conference where citizens and bureaucrats shared their knowledge and skills (Van Horn, 1984).

On the other side of things, there were an increasing number of bureaucrats who had learned what it took to be effective advocates for their causes. While perhaps not crystal clear, the rules and regulations were at least more defined than they had been in the 1960s. There were rules governing neighborhood associations, including adherence to Oregon's public meetings law, first established in 1972. There were rules established by the LCDC governing citizen involvement in the development of land use plans. Other city bureaus, including the Bureaus of Transportation and Planning, issued extensive process guides for citizen participation in transportation and planning issues. Additionally, the City of Portland, under the auspices of the Office of Neighborhood Associations, fully implemented Bureau Advisory Committees to provide direction to every bureau in the city. This vastly increased the number of citizens involved in the workings of city hall.

At the same time this growing army of citizens—versed in the new ways of doing things and comprising a kind of intermediary civic sector to address various community problem-solving venues—was a reality, there was also a growing number of citizens who felt unrepresented by this newly established civil order of things. In 1986, for example, a controversy developed in north Portland when a citizen activist declared that an established neighborhood association did not represent the neighborhood and wanted the city to recognize an alternative organization. The city refused, siding with the existing

structure (Oliver, 1986). This type of challenge became prevalent during the latter 1980s and 1990s.

An increasingly divisive issue that would play a critical role as Albina and other inner city neighborhoods gentrified, and as regional plans called upon these neighborhoods to support their share of density and affordable housing, was the balance between renters and home owners. At a public hearing in the 1990s Albina planning process, one outspoken home owner from the Piedmont neighborhood in northeast Portland, reacting to a proposed affordable housing zoning overlay, bluntly stated a common viewpoint about increased density and renters by saying, "If it's so good, why not go city-wide? I'm sure everyone would appreciate as much as I do the joy of having a low-income renter living in their neighbor's garage." He added, "Don't legislate slums for homes (Pearlman, 1992).

As early as 1976, the Black middle class began moving out of Albina and into more affluent middle class neighborhoods while new “urban pioneers” were moving in. Younger families and single people looking for affordable home buying opportunities were beginning to resettle parts of Albina. In addition to new White settlers, a pattern repeated itself as new immigrants moved into the area from southeast Asia and Latin America. Once again, the area was becoming a stop-over neighborhood (Olmos, 1976).

The Albina Story: Home to the Creative Class

In 1989, the City of Portland embarked on its most ambitious planning effort yet in Albina, the Albina Community Plan. Costing over \$1 million, the plan involved nearly 4,000 citizens. At least 140 meetings were held over a three year period in addition to public hearings before the city Planning Commission and city council. The study area of 19 square miles included all or part of 13 neighborhoods: Kenton, Arbor Lodge, Overlook, Piedmont, Humboldt, Boise, Eliot, Woodlawn, Concordia, King, Vernon, Sabin and Irvington. The plan was designed to set the course for land use and transportation, as well as public service. Michael Harrison, the lead planner for the city, stated at the outset, "This is the most ambitious planning effort that the city has ever taken on, and I think it's the most ambitious planning effort that any American city has taken on, in terms of trying to deal comprehensively in an action-oriented plan that's very strategic in its focus...It deals not just with land use, but family services, education, job-training and the public safety spectrum." The Oregonian described it in musical terms, "The Albina Community Plan is like a musical score, suggesting orchestration for dozens of public and private agencies from the Portland Public Schools to police, from the Coalition of Black Men to the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, from the Portland Development Commission to the City of Portland (Baker, 1992)."

The complexity of the undertaking is reflected in the lay-out of the action plan which relates each action step to an implementer, be it nonprofit organization, private enterprise or government agency. In total, 96 government agencies, nonprofit organizations and private companies are listed. Additionally, several categories of

implementers appear in general terms, including lending institutions, local realtors, tribal government, business associations, and unions. An examination of the implementer also reveals just how much the civic infrastructure of Albina and the City had changed since the 1950s. Of the 41 nonprofit implementers, only five existed in 1960: American Institute of Architects, National Association of Colored People, Boy Scouts, Urban League and United Way Portland Bureau of Planning 1993).

In order to ensure the process fit the guidelines for democratic planning, the Planning Bureau compiled a detailed process plan summary that included all the steps involved in the Albina planning process and its implementation. The summary detailed the technical stages of data collection and map making, workshops and public hearings, and various planning commission and city council briefings. The Planning Commission itself held additional special interest group presentations as it deliberated on the plan during the spring of 1992; and the Planning Bureau continued workshops in the community (Portland Bureau of Planning, 1989).

Complicating the landscape even further, the City of Portland's Historic Landmarks Commission was in the midst of creating Historic Districts in the city and corresponding citizen advisory councils to monitor the designated areas. Eight of the districts were in north and northeast Portland: Kenton, Mock's Crest, Irvington, Eliot, Piedmont, Woodlawn, Mississippi, and Russell. Seven of the districts were eventually approved (Sullivan, 1992).

There were many controversial elements to the plan, but none more so than the issue of housing density. The Affordable Housing Overlay was an option that raised emotionally-charged issues about renters as neighbors, as well as feeding the controversy

around increased density. The overlay proposed to relax some restrictions of the zoning code to allow auxiliary rental units to be built in homes or garages, and to allow higher densities for developers who agreed to keep some units at "affordable rents." Many residents feared these provisions would create low-income ghettos, and they demanded the overlay — if it were to be applied at all — should be on a city-wide basis. The difficult challenge of devising an acceptable policy on the affordable housing overlay rule delayed by several months the final review of the plan by the City Planning Commission (Pearlman 1992).

Once a draft plan was created by staff at the Bureau of Planning, working with the various citizen-based committees, public forums were held in the spring of 1992 to accept other testimony from citizens. All in all, the Planning Bureau staff attempted to incorporate 650 requested changes to the plan (four times the expected number). In the end, 450 amendments were added before the plan was presented to the city Planning Commission (How to Improve, 1992).

By fall of 1992, when the report went to the Planning Commission, criticism from the community had simmered. In fact, one of the most pointed criticisms at these hearings came from an architect who felt the process had overly favored the direction of citizens. Gary Papers, a representative of the American Institute of Architects, said he was “disappointed that the commission has responded so consistently to NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) testimony...the proposed zoning allows inner city neighborhoods to remain at low suburban density with commercial services geared to pass through auto traffic...the area will do none of its share to absorb the population increase expected in the metropolitan area in the next twenty years (Pearlman 1992).”

The last episode in urban renewal and the building of civic infrastructure in Albina revolved around the construction of a north-south light rail system, connecting downtown to north Portland. Options for the placement of the route emerged in 1992 during the Albina planning process. Albina residents, stakeholders, and city planners debated routes along Martin Luther King Blvd. (previously Union Avenue), Williams Avenue, I-5 (the Minnesota Freeway) and Interstate Avenue. In the end, a route paralleling Interstate Avenue triumphed, taking pressure off the heart of Albina. In 1999, TriMet, the regional transportation authority and the Portland Development Commission created the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Advisory Committee to oversee the development of an urban renewal plan for the Interstate Corridor, and subsequently created four working committees to create action plans related to: economic development, community livability, housing, and transportation.

By now, the routines of establishing public involvement are well established, including months of painstaking work to create principles and practices. This may take a long time since operating rules are brokered between citizens and government agencies, not devised beforehand by the convening agency.

The operating principles for the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Advisory Group reflected the experience of decades of process planning:

- Working Group members are expected to regularly attend and be active participants in meetings and in the community participation process.
- Working Group members are expected to share information with their neighbors, organizations, constituents, etc. and to bring those viewpoints back to Working Group deliberations.

- The public will have opportunities to comment and ask questions before any committee action.
- Divergent views and opinion are expected and are to be respected.
- The power of the Working Group to affect Urban Renewal Advisory Committee recommendations and City decisions is in seeking agreement among its diverse membership and interests.
- The Working Group will strive to reach consensus in all recommendations. In the event consensus cannot be reached, a vote will be taken, and a majority and minority report will be presented to the Advisory Committee.
- The Working Group process will focus on results and outcomes; members will assist in facilitating the process to achieve results.
- Open communication and willingness to work together to find common ground is the key to developing effective strategies.
- It is the responsibility of all who attend meetings to be respectful of previous Working Group actions and decisions, which will be shared briefly at the beginning of each meeting (Working Group, 1999).

As with the changes noted earlier in examining groups existing in the 1960s as compared to the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is interesting to note the evolution of civic organizations during the 1990s. While there are a number of familiar civic organizations from the Albina Plan days, there are also many new groups. The 90 people involved with Intestate Urban Renewal committees represented 69 different government agencies, private businesses or nonprofit organizations. Out of that 69, at least 29 (42%) are

community-based organizations founded after 1991.

The emergence of each organization carries its own particular tale, but perhaps the one most pertinent to understanding changes in the civic structure in Albina and greater northeast Portland is the growth of housing and community development groups. There were eight organizations on the Interstate Advisory Committee or sub-committees whose focus is housing and community development issues. Several other groups not specifically serving on the committees are also playing a significant role. The Portland Housing Center, founded in 1991 to provide assistance to first-time home buyers, along with the Portland Community Land Trust, received \$900,000 from the city for home buyer assistance programs. Another \$200,000 went to the Portland Housing Center and Northeast Workforce Center's Eviction Prevention and Financial Assistance Program. In contrast to the earlier reluctance to forge a community development corporation in Albina in the 1960s, caused by the community's fear of intrusive city authority, the City of Portland now eagerly embraces the civic organizations that serve as intermediaries in public-private partnerships.

And public-private partnerships are not the only venue in Albina. The Community Alliance of Tenants is part of a new coalition of organizations, the Interstate Alliance to End Displacement, the members of which come from within Albina as well as the surrounding region. The Coalition urges direct actions, more akin to the tradition of Black United Front and Albina Fair Share. In an invitation to organize against the displacement that might result from the creation of the Interstate Urban Renewal District, the Coalition called upon the past to draw citizens into the struggle:

The Portland Development Commission's plan to move forward with construction of

the Interstate light rail while freezing other projects in the Interstate Urban Renewal Area has residents worried that history will repeat itself. The residents are concerned about housing displacement, which is caused by real estate prices rapidly outpacing incomes. The city is currently investing millions of urban renewal dollars in light rail, which is fueling the real estate market, with no program in place to protect residents from displacement. Despite the Portland Development Commission's attempts to improve its image, this plan reminds many residents of the negative legacy of past large scale public projects in the Interstate Corridor, such as the Memorial Coliseum, the I-5 Freeway, and Emmanuel hospital, which displaced hundreds of residents and businesses. (Hop Hopkins, personal communication, October 26, 2001)

It is also worth noting another civic player in the politics of urban renewal in Albina—the Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF), a coalition of 60 progressive organizations focused on the environment, housing, social justice, transportation, food and agricultural sustainability, and community development. CLF helped organize the anti-displacement coalition by funding a full-time organizer position for Albina. What is especially significant about their involvement is that the group brings a multi-issue perspective as well as a regional perspective, linking neighborhood-specific issues such as density to regional livability goals.

A thorough examination of public involvement in the Albina area of northeast Portland over the course of the past 50 years reveals a remarkable evolution in the civic infrastructure of the community. Urban renewal efforts in the 1950s were dominated by a narrowly defined set of civic players, many representing downtown interests.

Contrast this with the planning processes of the 1990s, where 221 different public, private and nonprofit organizations claim a place at the table—98 nonprofits, 43 government agencies and schools, 30 businesses and business associations. Nor is it simply a matter of numbers of groups or the limited nature of the interests represented back in 1960. The members of the first Redevelopment Advisory Board might have had difficulty imagining a landscape where 4000 citizens are directly involved in a single community planning effort (the Albina Plan), a world where private nonprofits serve as contractors for redevelopment services and an umbrella group (Coalition for a Livable Future) leverages money from a private foundation to organize residents to resist displacement. The rehabilitation of blighted neighborhoods, while an important achievement of urban renewal, is probably not as profound as the transformation of civic infrastructure and the institutionalization of civic practices that incorporate a broader range of citizens.

The revitalization of Albina worked, and is often the case, too well. Alberta and Mississippi streets, once thought of as the heart of the degraded area of Albina are now the central collectors for the creative class. Indicators of the neighborhood's rise abound: Starbucks and other coffee shops, restaurants serving local and organic northwest cuisine, hip music venues, and a monthly art walk on Thursday nights that attracts so many people there has been the need at time to bring in extra police to handle the crowds. House prices has sky rocked, and no surprise, many of the indigenous population, mostly African American, have once more been displaced. In a word, revitalization has brought on a severe case of gentrification.

The tension created through the successful revitalization of the Albina neighborhood has also spawned a creative civic innovation, the Restorative Listening Project, run through the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Judith Mowery, a professional mediator, working with local neighborhood activists John Canda and Celeste Carey, initiated the project, rooted in restorative justice, similar to the type applied in the truth and reconciliation commission after the end of apartheid in South Africa. The goal of the project is to have white people better understand the effect gentrification can have on the city's longtime black and other-minority neighborhoods by having minority residents tell what it is like to be on the receiving end. Since the project began in 2007, 15 African Americans have presented their experiences and some 225 people have attended at least one session. There are systemic economic inequities at the heart of the revitalization and subsequent gentrification in Albina, but the Restorative Listening Project is providing a pathway to bridge the tattered history of Albina with a more hopeful future.