

# Detroit aiming to revitalize its downtown

DETROIT (AP) - Hastings Street was the place to be on steamy summer nights in Detroit many decades ago.

It was the heart of Detroit's Paradise Valley, an area that defined the city's Black culture, arts and music until many of the businesses and homes were demolished beginning in the 1950s in the name of economic development.

In an effort to recapture the excitement and thriving business climate of the old

district, a small enclave of shops and buildings in a northeast corner of downtown will be designated the new Paradise Valley.

City leaders hope to attract music clubs, galleries and other vendors tapping into Detroit's Black art and cultural heritage.

Art dealer George N'Namdi, who has a temporary gallery in the area, predicts it will be a magnet for tourists of all colors.

"Having an area where African-American culture is

happening doesn't mean it has to cater solely to African-American people," N'Namdi said. "There is the jazz, techno, Motown, and people have been collecting art here for a number of years."

While officials haven't decided if the area actually will bear the name "Paradise Valley," they are confident it will join the newly opened Asian Village marketplace and established Greektown district in embracing and showcasing the city's various cultures.

Greektown has been a drawing point to downtown for years with its collection of Greek-themed restaurants and shops. Asian Village is an 18,000-square-foot mix of restaurants, shopping and entertainment along Detroit's riverfront.

"We promote downtown as a multicultural destination and its amazing various pockets of ethnicity," said Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau spokeswoman Renee Monforton.

Designers of the new Paradise Valley can borrow from the original, which hosted musicians including Charlie Parker, Lionel Hampton and B.B. King.

"All classes of people were attracted to Paradise Valley," said 73-year-old Jimmy Crawford, a drummer. "Hastings carried all kinds of nightlife and the businesses were owned by Blacks."

The new Paradise Valley is not the first attempt by city officials to capitalize on Detroit's Black heritage. A

few years ago, a few city council members supported a plan to create an all-Black business district with taxpayer money called "African Town." It was scrapped after protests.

The new Paradise Valley will share an area with Harmonie Park, which celebrates Detroit's German culture with old-world style restaurants, art galleries and coffee shops. Designers tout the area's "walkability" and access to theaters, the Opera House and Music Hall.

Harmonie Park also attracts visitors before and after sporting events at Comerica Park, where the Detroit Tigers play, and at Ford Field, home to the Detroit Lions.

Designers from the University of Detroit-Mercy, which was brought into the project by the Detroit Economic Growth Corp., envision Paradise Valley as intimate and appealing.

"We're talking smaller galleries, clubs and restaurants. The focus will be en-

tertainment," said Dan Pitera, executive director of the Detroit Collaborative Design Center at the University of Detroit-Mercy, who expects a final design by the end of October.

Detroit's Downtown Development Authority approved \$10 million for the district, which includes the hiring of the design team.

The designers are looking at the current layout of Harmonie Park to see how it can be improved with park and plaza space, sidewalk changes and other streetscape makeovers. They are expected to recommend the best possible uses for four city-owned buildings and two vacant lots in Harmonie Park.

"We certainly can't recreate the past. The conditions that created Paradise Valley aren't the same," said Detroit Economic Growth Corp. project management director Malik Goodwin. "We're trying to celebrate it by redesigning it, making it a commercial enterprise."

## NAACP

(Continued from Page 4) and return to their homes, our laws will help ensure that eligible voters retain the right to participate in the political process."

In June, the state mailed out notices to 55,000 displaced residents to notify the

## Handbook

(Continued from Page 4) NAACP chapter, said the officer who created the book should be severely punished or fired.

"It was really a slap in the African-American community's face," said Galloway, who is running for the school board. "We're paying their salaries with our tax dollars," Galloway said of the district police. "It does reflect on the district."

## Shaq

(Continued from Page 12) In the petition, Shaq refers to the Star Island mansion as "the former marital home." Shaunie, he says, has been "secretive about her assets... particularly with respect to certain properties owned or titled in either [her] name alone or in other entities."

He wants the court to order Shaunie to give a "correct accounting of all money, funds, stocks, bonds, and other securities (including bearer securities)" that she came into during the marriage.

He makes \$20 million a year, with three years left on a five-year contract worth \$100 million. Shaunie should be "primary residential custodian" of their children — meaning they'd live with her — and he should get "liberal rights of visitation," he said.

The O'Neals could not be reached for comment. No word on who represents Shaunie. Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Roberto Pineiro has the case.

parish where they were originally registered to update their status and to re-register. In July, reminder notices were sent out and the displaced residents were told to come in person to their parish registrar to explain why they should not be purged.

School board member Larry Marshall said the document was inappropriate, even if it was meant to be a joke. "These are very racially sensitive times," he said.

"It was a huge mistake in judgment."

Those who did not respond by Aug. 15 were taken off of the voting rolls. It is estimated that 21,000 voters, mainly African-American, were dropped.

The LDF said that the action taken by Dardenne is in violation of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires Louisiana to pre-clear any election law changes with the U.S. Justice Department. The organization seeks to have all of the purged voters restored to their permanent voting status.

James Wright writes for Afro-American Newspapers.

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