

# A POSSIBLE TIME BOMB?

## The Riverfront Research Park

Plans are in the works for a Riverfront Research Park, a joint City of Eugene-University of Oregon project to develop land along the banks of the Willamette River, both north and south of the Autzen foot bridge. This summer, significant moves were made towards a multi-million dollar development that will be principally occupied by companies doing scientific research. Some light manufacturing will be permitted as well as support businesses offering services in the area. The development eventually might contain living spaces also.

The specific steps taken were: 1) the amendment of the Metro Area General Plan by the various government bodies to change the zoning of approximately 140 acres along the river from "open space/government/education" to "University research"; 2) the writing of a draft proposal by University President Paul Olum setting out the conditions for the lease of 70 acres of this land for the development (the State owns the land, and the State Board of Education will approve of and sign the lease with the developer); and 3) the selection of the Carley Capital Group of Washington D.C. as the developer.

By summer's end, significant opposition to the development had appeared. Private citizens, a local peace group, environmental activists, UO students, and professors had all written, spoken and acted to either slow down or stop action on the development.

by Lucia McKelvey

According to one long-time Eugene observer, "They could be sitting on a time bomb, and the thing is, I don't think they know it."

To many involved in the planning so far, including university officials, city council members and planning commission members, the process has been slow and well thought out. UO President Paul Olum has said the project is at least two years old in his mind. However, some citizens who attended public hearings regarding the rezoning and consequent amending of the Metro Plan have been shocked at the speed with which decisions are being made. Citizen input, they feel, has been minimal. And some UO students and professors also are upset about the nature of the decision-making process among other things. They are not sure the best interests of the university are being considered.

### Three Questions

Although there are many questions about if, how, why and when this development should take place, three stand out. Environmentally is this the best use of the land and are there dangers of toxic wastes and emissions leaking into the water and air? Should classified research be banned, as it is on the

UO campus? Where will the money come from to finance it?

### Environmental

Regarding the land use question, the city's reason for amending the Metro Plan is economic development—the city wants to diversify the economy and help create more jobs. The city sees this cooperative effort with the university as a specific way to fulfill these goals. However, some Eugenians share the views expressed by UO geography professor Alvin Urquart who writes, "The most attractive quality of that area is its open, quiet, peaceful character. . . . For university students it is their closest access to a large tranquil area in a bustling city. For other Eugenians, it is the quietest stretch along the river from the Valley River Bike Bridge to Springfield."

According to the North Campus Plan put forward by a study group in 1982, that area was reserved for university club sports and intramural playing fields as well as a

ing, enforcement of penalties when necessary, and possible law suits? The myth that "high tech" industries are clean and safe is quickly being dispelled. Not only are toxic wastes in Silicon Valley becoming a horrendous problem, but the rate of illness of workers in semi-conductor industries is three times that of all industry, according to federal and California figures on occupational illness.

### Classified Research

The question of whether to ban classified research at the Park has been probably the most publicly debated one. In April, University President Paul Olum announced the ban on classified research the university adheres to would not extend to the Riverfront Research Park. This fired up some students and professors who lobbied the Campus Planning Committee. The committee was in the process of recommending to Olum the conditions for the lease. They agreed to the following ban: ". . . no re-

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"natural area" for both study and enjoyment. Urquart continues: "I don't think we should see the adoption of this plan as likely to result in a major transformation in Eugene's economy. Rather it may well result in a major decline in Eugene's most valuable resource, its natural amenities."

Regarding the possible environmental dangers, Eugene is currently in the process of revising city-wide ordinances covering toxic wastes and emissions. However, one of the biggest problems with environmental laws is enforcement. Will the city budget allow for continual environmental monitor-

search will be carried out the clearly foreseeable and probably result of which, the direct result of which, the direct application of which, or any specific purpose of which, is to destroy human life or to incapacitate human beings."

In his draft proposal, Olum recommended: "No research or development is permitted whose specific purpose or primary consequence is to destroy or injure human life. In particular, then, no research or development is permitted which is directed toward the production of weapons."

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