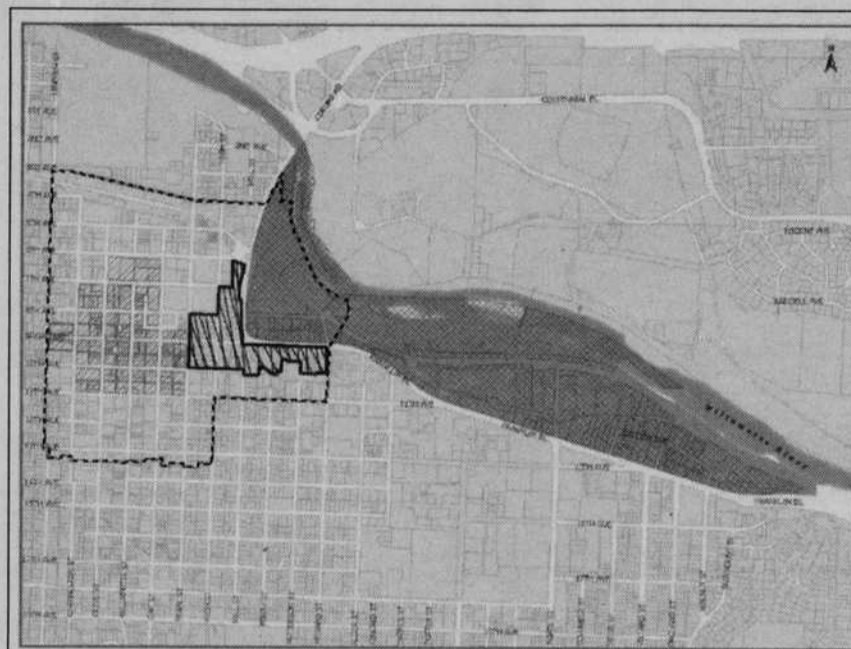


Public shows mixed emotions about Riverfront Park plan



PROPOSED EXPANSION:
The Riverfront Urban Renewal District

Parcels	106
Acres	19.24
Improved Value	56,389,218
Land Value	27,151,942
Total Land & Improved Value	83,541,160

Regional Locator

City of Eugene Planning and Development
November 11, 2003

Proposed Riverfront Urban Renewal Expansion
Downtown Urban Renewal District Downtown Study Boundary Riverfront Urban Renewal District

The updated development plan would change the park's name and add seven blocks to the area

By Nika Carlson
News Reporter

The Eugene City Council held its first and only public hearing Monday evening on a proposed update to the Riverfront Research Park development plan, but public testimony prompted the council to keep the project open to public comment until Monday, Feb. 16.

The Riverfront Research Park Urban Renewal District Plan, in the works for the past year, is scheduled to be adopted by the council at its 7:30 p.m. meeting Feb. 23. The update will be in effect until 2024.

The updated plan, first adopted in 1985, will change the name of the area to the Riverfront Urban Renewal Area if passed by city councilors, reflecting a change in focus away from the research park on the Willamette River and toward urban development.

The city plans to expand the Riverfront Urban Renewal District by seven blocks, extending it from the Willamette River up Broadway to Pearl Street. The expansion will include the land where the new federal courthouse is scheduled to be built.

The council was also scheduled to approve a new Downtown Plan, which would have updated the city's development goals for the downtown core, Monday night. However, the council meeting ran too long for the Downtown Plan to be addressed.

City Planner Richie Weinman said the city administration wants to connect the riverfront area to the development area encompassed by the Downtown Plan.

"It kind of bridges the two," Weinman said.

If the plan is approved, taxes from the Riverfront Urban Renewal District can then be used to finance develop-

ment in the extension included in the city's improvement goals for the core downtown area.

"The focus is not on the riverfront research area," Weinman said.

Urban renewal districts are created to finance development within that district. Any new taxes collected from the development of an urban renewal area are put back into improving the area. Without such a plan, taxes would go to the city's general fund.

"In theory it could be a lot of money," Weinman said. "It depends on how much development goes on."

The plan projects that the district will collect more than \$40 million in taxes over the next 20 years, though Weinman said those are "guesstimates" based on development predictions for the period.

Weinman said the riverfront plan was originally developed closely in conjunction with the University in large part to assist in the creation of a University-run research park along the Willamette River. The 67-acre park now has 18 tenants, according to the University's Web site for the park.

Most of the taxes collected in the district went to the building of roads and other infrastructure around the park, Weinman added.

The new plan, with its focus on the corridor connecting the river to downtown, has a number of possible general projects, ranging from decorative elements like fountains to major projects like a new police station and a parking garage.

"The plan allows for all those things," Weinman said. "What will actually happen will be determined later by the city council."

Public testimony on the riverfront plan at the council's meeting was mixed. Many of the 12 speakers expressed concerns about the environmental impact of development, a shift in tax dollars and what they saw as a lack of success with the University's Riverfront Research Park.

Al Urquhart, a Eugene resident, shared concerns about what he called

the "failure of the district."

"The area is still blighted," he said.

He asked council members to remove the University's Riverfront Research Park from the newly proposed boundaries of the urban renewal district.

However, others supported the project.

Terry Connolly of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and Russ Brink of Downtown Eugene Inc., spoke separately in favor of the expanded district, saying it was one of the few tools available for cities to use in improvement projects.

No University representatives spoke at the hearing, but Diane Wiley, director of the Riverfront Research Park Office, said later that the University has had little to do with the update in the riverfront plan.

"It's the city's district, and it's their prerogative," she said.

The University currently is not receiving any money from the urban renewal district, she said.

"People think the money was just directed to us and it wasn't," she added.

Wiley said the University never received very much money from the city for the research park, in part because of land use appeals that tied up the University's development in the area.

"Because of the challenges the district was slower in producing revenue than was originally projected," she said. "There weren't as many projects as there might have been."

To submit public comment, send Weinman a written letter at the Planning and Development Department at 99 West 10th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401 or send an e-mail to richie.d.weinman@ci.eugene.or.us. Comments also can be submitted at Eugene City Hall, located at 777 Pearl Street. All comments must be received by 5 p.m. Monday

Contact the city/
state politics reporter
at nikacarlson@dailyemerald.com.

Today's crossword solution

B	A	T	S	O	P	A	L	S	A	B	E	L
E	D	I	T	A	U	D	I	T	C	A	P	O
T	U	B	E	F	L	A	M	E	E	W	E	R
A	L	I	A	S	E	M	B	A	T	T	L	E
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