

# Renewal plan faces challenge

A petition contesting the proposed Riverfront Urban Renewal District may pass the issue to voters this fall

By Parker Howell  
News Reporter

Voters may need to approve the city's plan to fund projects in the Riverfront Urban Renewal District after opponents of the plan submitted a petition challenging it April 9. The Eugene City Council had approved the new district on March 8.

The urban renewal district covers areas east of downtown, including the Eugene Water and Electric Board headquarters and the Riverfront Research Park. The plan also includes a controversial proposal to reroute Broadway to run east of the planned federal courthouse site.

Petitioners collected 4,235 signatures but only needed 3,722 valid signatures of registered voters to put the referendum on the ballot. If approved, the referendum would give voters the opportunity to approve or reject the urban renewal district.

The city has forwarded 4,166 signatures to Lane County for final approval and county officials have until April 26 to verify the signatures.

Differences between the present and future assessed value of property within the urban renewal district would create taxes to be used for public improvement projects in the district.

Opponents cite different reasons for opposing the plan, saying the district would divert money from other needed services and may lead to construction along the Willamette River.

Housing and Neighborhoods Manager Richie Weinman said the referendum could appear on either a September special election ballot or

during the Nov. 2 general election.

Eugene resident Ruth Duemler organized the petition effort, coordinating about a dozen signature gatherers. Duemler said the petition met with public support, and she believed enough signatures were collected to place the referendum on the ballot.

"People were eager to sign," Duemler said.

**"We are not against development — we want the public to have a say in how their money is spent as taxpayers."**

Ruth Duemler  
Eugene resident

Duemler said urban renewal is not the city's best use of tax revenues.

"I think (people) are fearful of spending so much money (on urban renewal) when we have other priorities," she said.

Duemler said petitioners were not opposed to developing the area, however.

"We've seen some very fine buildings go up without urban renewal funding," Duemler said. "We are not against development — we want the public to have a say in how their money is spent as taxpayers."

Eugene resident and land-use activist Zachary Vishanoff said he hoped the city would cease work on urban renewal until more public hearings were held.

"The problem is, urban renewal has a bad track record in terms of accountability," Vishanoff said.

Vishanoff said he didn't feel the city

had solicited enough input from residents about urban renewal plans.

"What I would like to see is the city having a real dialogue with people on urban renewal," he said. "I'm pessimistic about the city's decision and timetable on this thing."

Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly, who voted in favor of creating the district, said he supports the plan as a tool to help improve the downtown area.

"I think that central-city revitalization is really important for Eugene's continued health," Kelly said.

Kelly said the plan will reshape the entrance to downtown and increase accessibility to the Willamette River for pedestrians who aren't familiar with the area.

He said he would like the plan to be "a good deal more specific" in terms of the projects it allows. Kelly said he pushed for a clause in the plan that refers any projects of \$250,000 or more to the council for approval. Citizens would be able to have a say in such projects through the council, he said.

If voters reject the Riverfront plan, Kelly said that "significantly less" development would occur in the area.

"We're going to see less activity and less success of the area," Kelly said.

Kelly said some opponents are concerned about rerouting Broadway because it would be too close to the river. However, he said the road would actually be south of the railroad tracks.

"You can have a debate as to how close to the river that is," Kelly said.

Kelly emphasized that money earmarked for urban renewal would come from tax increases in the area that would not likely be generated at all without the urban renewal district.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at [parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com](mailto:parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com).

## CAMPUS BUZZ

### Friday and weekend

- Art exhibit featuring Bachelor of Fine Arts painting by Meghan Calhoun and Miki'ala Souza, BFA sculpture by Lee Ann Peterson and BFA ceramics by Rosemary Raburn, LaVerne Krause Gallery, Lawrence Hall, Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Oregon Ballroom Dance, Room 220, Gerlinger Hall, Friday, 7:30-11:30 p.m.
- Play reading directed by Jennifer Thomas, Robinson Theatre, Friday, 7:30 p.m.
- Welcome Back Swifts event — thousands of Vaux's Swifts will enter the Agate Hall chimney to roost for the night. The birds begin circling about 30 minutes before sunset, Agate Hall, Friday, 7:30 p.m. A second swifts event is planned April 23.
- Repertory Dance Company Concert Tour, Dougherty Dance Theatre, Gerlinger Annex, Friday-Saturday, 8 p.m.
- Historic Preservation lecture featuring a presentation by Tama Tochihiro entitled "Lost and Found: Preserving the Japanese Gardens of the Issei in Seattle," and by Jose Gamez entitled "Painting the Town: Muralism and the Politics of Identity in East L.A." Room 282, Lillis Hall, Saturday, 9-10:45 a.m.
- 29th-annual Hui O' Hawai'i Lu'au featuring authentic Hawaiian food, traditional dancing and live music, McArthur Court, Saturday, 4:30 p.m.
- Chamber Music Series Concert entitled "Masters of Indian Music," Beall Concert Hall, Saturday, 8 p.m.
- Outdoor Fiber-In, sunny weather: EMU East Lawn; rainy weather: EMU Fishbowl, Sunday, 2-4 p.m.
- University Symphony, Beall Concert Hall, Sunday, 3 p.m.

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## 2004 ASUO Elections Voter's Guide Correction

### Question:

Shall the ASUO Constitution be changed to strike the following language?

### Section 6.15

The ASUO recommended incidental fee assessment for each of the following Major Programs:

- 1) ASUO Programs
- 2) The Athletic Department, and
- 3) The incidental fee portion of the EMU budget;

~~excluding replenishment for expenditures from the previous year's building reserves,~~ shall not exceed a 7% increase over the previous year's student incidental fee assessment, unless individually approved by an initiative or referendum shall under Section 14 of this Constitution. If placed on the ballot, the measure shall specify the exact amount in both percentage and dollars by which the 7% limitation will be exceeded.

### Explanation:

The Oregon University System policies governing the maintenance and funding of building and equipment reserves has been changed. Where the old model was based on a two part allocation, an annual percentage addition as well as a replenishment of the past year's expenditures, the new model is based solely on a five year plan for expected expenditures. The language we ask to strike was added last year to accommodate the old OUS system and requirements.

### Submitted:

Maddy Melton, ASUO President 03-04