

Bakery might become site for new UO arena

Plans for a new basketball stadium move forward again after cost overruns last year stalled them

BEN BROWN
NEWS REPORTER

Plans for a rebuilt and modernized McArthur Court are moving forward at the Williams Bakery site, though not as quickly as originally planned.

University Vice President for Administration Dan Williams — who is not affiliated with the bakery — said work has been going on behind the scenes since University President Dave Frohnmayer stalled the project indefinitely in February 2004 because of its \$180 million pricetag.

At that time, the University was planning to build on its secondary site at Howe Field, at the corner of University Street and East 18th Avenue.

"We didn't have a plan we thought was affordable," Williams said.

Since then, the owners of Williams Bakery, located on East 13th Avenue, Columbia Street and Villard Street, have become more willing to selling the land. Williams said the University has been working with bakery owners on a relocation effort that would free up the land for University purchase.

"From the beginning, the bakery was our primary site," Williams said.

Williams said it is still too early in the process for a price estimate and no plans have been drawn up or contractors hired.

After more than a year of planning and consideration, the University settled on a list of seven sites for consideration. The primary sites considered were Howe Field and the current site of Williams Bakery. Both of these sites were popular because of their proximity to campus.

Frohnmayer announced his approval of the new sports arena in August 2003.

In October 2003 Frohnmayer announced that the University had settled on its secondary site — Howe Field — for the new sports facility. Final plans for the project included a training center and a two-story, 670-space parking garage.

The parking garage was meant to allay concerns of people living south of the University. Attendance of Ducks basketball games exacerbates parking difficulties and traffic in the neighborhood during winter.

Peg Peters, president of the South University Neighbors Association said residents of the neighborhood raised concerns that a new, larger structure would bring more traffic.

The real trouble began in November 2003, when the University Senate voted unanimously to censure the University for the method by which it selected Howe Field as the area for the new arena. The Senate said the University failed to submit its plan to the Campus Planning Committee as per University policy.

Business professor and Senate member Mike Russo presented the resolution to the Senate to express his opposition to the plan and remedy the situation.

"There is a profound sense that this system is out of balance," Russo said. "We have planning processes for a reason."

Williams admitted he did not follow policy.

"It wasn't really relevant to what we're doing today," Williams said, adding that the policy was written in 1983.

Further problems occurred in January 2004 when the estimated cost of the arena jumped \$20 million to a total of \$180 million, twice as much as the \$90 million initial estimates called for.

The University managed to raise \$100 million in philanthropic donations for the project. Most of the money came from Nike Chairman and CEO Phil Knight and Pat Kilkenny, chairman of The Arrowhead Group.

Williams said the project is now moving forward slowly.

"We expect to build the arena if we find land that works," he said.

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Review: Residence halls receive low rating

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standard double room offers 148 square feet of living space and includes a bed, desk and closet space. A deluxe double is 300 square feet. The most spacious rooms are in Barnhart Hall where a standard double is 264 square feet and includes its own bathroom.

Eyster said he knows that the residence halls need to be improved. He has been told that students have come through the University and had second thoughts about coming

here after seeing the residence halls.

"To attract the students we want to attract we need to improve the residence halls," Eyster said.

Eyster said those concerns are why the Living Learning Center is such an important project. Eyster said the center is the first step in a long-term process. Not only will the center provide students with bigger rooms, but it will also allow Housing to empty other residence halls to renovate or replace them.

However, since the Living

Learning Center won't be completed until fall 2006, in the meantime Housing provides students with the opportunity to attend panel discussions with University management staff and offer feedback on a number of topics, including their living situations.

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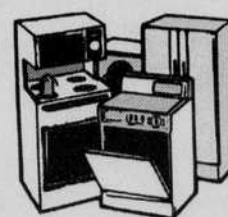
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