

# Development: Education key for officials, neighbors in accepting change

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understanding, a working relationship can be maintained.

"The people who are open to change want recognition and mitigation of any impacts to the neighborhood," Nelson said.

Retired University anthropology professor emeritus Don Dumond said he and his wife bought their home on Moss Street in 1962, several months before the University began acquiring property in the same neighborhood.

Dumond said some of the neighbors' biggest concerns centered around the amount of traffic generated by the various activities being held in nearby buildings, the lack of logic that went into the placement of activities throughout the neighborhood, and the condition of the houses the University owned.

"The ones that they bought they simply treated anyway they wanted to," Dumond said. "This all got to be kind of irritating."

Neighborhood conditions improved with time, and the University realized it was "going to be in the real-estate business for quite a while," so it began paying closer attention to the conditions of both the houses and of the neighborhood as a whole, Dumond said.

## Drafting a plan

The first working agreement between the neighborhood and the University came in 1982 in the form of the Fairmount/University of Oregon Special Area Study, a result of what Dumond said was more than 10 years of unregulated University expansion and nearly six years of conversations between University officials and neighborhood representatives.

The University's expansion into the East Campus neighborhood correlated with the city's request that neighborhoods organize and produce a refinement plan, Dumond said, and the neighbors embraced the request as a way to solidify a working relationship between them and a real-estate giant in the area: the University.

The Fairmount Neighborhood Association organized in 1972 and began working on a refinement plan with the University in 1976, Dumond said. Within a few years Dumond was chairman of the committee created to form the plan.

Everyone involved in brainstorming and drafting the plan had distinct ideas as to what it should entail and which issues it should address foremost, Dumond said.

"It took a while to get everyone sort of down to the point where they dealt with what more than one person would see as a problem," he said. "There were all kinds of gripes to get over."

Ramey said the barrage of different opinions can be one of the most difficult aspects about public involvement in the planning process.

"As a public agency, we're really charged by the public to be stewards of the University and its mission, so that doesn't really give us the freedom to meet every demand that the neighbors might have," Ramey said.

It took several years for the neighborhood and University to draft a workable and beneficial plan, Dumond said, but the 1982 plan they ultimately produced served as such, limiting University development in a way that wasn't inhibitive or intrusive.

"The main thing was the University would stop leapfrogging activities around the neighborhood," Dumond said.

The 1982 plan focused on keeping University development on a logical path of continuity and similarity — expansion would start closest to campus and expand outward as needed, allowing for growth but ensuring problems could be mitigated if they arose.

## Time for change

Dumond said the 1982 plan functioned the way it was intended for nearly 20 years, until it came time for the University to make use of the property that had been preserved in the form of student- and family-rented houses.

Using the land for necessary University purposes became a pressing need a few years ago, Williams said, and attention began to focus on how to develop that land in a way that was beneficial to both the University and the surrounding community.

"We knew that if we could engage them in the process, the likelihood of an outcome that we all felt comfortable with, both the University and the neighbors, was going to increase significantly," Williams said.

Williams said negotiating a beneficial settlement boils down to learning how to navigate the relationship between the University and the surrounding neighborhoods.

"Anytime you have a large organization that has significant economic impact on the community you're going to generate kind of a love-hate relationship with your neighbors," Williams said. "(Neighbors) appreciate the value that you bring to the community, but with that comes cars, a lot of commotion."

Nelson said all neighbors do not oppose change, but many are skeptical of what the results of the changes might be.

"Without change there's stagnation, so if you've got change going on it's not necessarily bad unless it's bad change," Nelson said.

Ramey said fear of the unknown is

a driving force behind the conflict that arises between the University and its surrounding neighborhoods.

"This is an inherent difficulty in urban planning, particularly with university relations — the need for change and the fear of that change," Ramey said.

Williams said development in the East Campus neighborhood a few years back came after more than 40 years of using the East Campus property as a land bank for the future development of the University.

"I think most people recognize that things are going to be different, but what they have a right to expect in the neighborhood is that when these changes occur, that they're thoughtful, and we take into consideration the interest the neighbors have in preserving their property and the value of their property," Williams said.

## A two-way learning process

The current East Campus development plan is the result of more than 20 public meetings over the course of a year and a half involving University and neighborhood representatives.

Dumond said the process of updating the campus plan involved educating University officials, who were part of the process, on the "bindingness" of the 1982 plan and its implementations.

"Even the planning department head (Ramey) was unaware of it and was about to do things that were in opposition to the 1982 agreement until he was called on them," Dumond said. "But it was all innocent. That is, it was simply a lack of knowledge."

Dumond said this lack of knowledge resulted in the University originally citing the Moss Street Children's Center south of 17th Avenue, a violation of the 1982 plan's agreement to limit development to the north side of 17th Avenue until they explored expansion options and filled all available property to the south.

This caused uproar with neighborhood residents who initially met it with an attitude of "it was nobody's business, that the University ought to be able to do it," Dumond said.

"They had to get sort of sensitized to the fact that there were people out there who did have a certain, not just a stake in it, but they had certain prerogatives that came to them as a result of previous agreements," Dumond said.

But after University officials were versed in the significance of the 1982 agreement and the need to coordinate development plans with neighborhood needs, they "bent over backwards to try to keep those of us in the neighborhood from being upset," Dumond said.

The center was relocated south of 17th Avenue, but it still generated a large amount of vocal disapproval

from neighborhood residents.

Williams said the University went into the updating process with a slightly different interpretation of certain areas of the 1982 agreement than some of the neighborhood residents, which "got everyone off to the wrong foot."

Some residents felt the University needed to share authority over its East Campus properties with the neighborhood, "and we simply weren't going to do that," Williams said.

"We're not going to make decisions that commit the University in the long term to do things that are not reasonable," Williams said.

Nelson was chairman of the Fairmount Neighborhood Association committee involved in the updating process and agreed the neighborhood had expected to play a greater role than it did.

"Everyone kind of went in thinking that we'd be able to map out the University's future when at the end of the day we can only say these are the general guidelines and the University needs to have the ability to do what it needs to do," Nelson said.

Neighbors have a big stake in the University's development plans because of the sheer geographic location of their property, "so it's really not at all surprising that that would come with a lot of emotional charge," Ramey said.

Ramey said many of the neighbors were against change from the very beginning so the University had to educate them in a way similar to how Dumond described the neighborhood's education of the administration on the specifics of the 1982 plan.

"They're opening thought was 'all change is bad,' so we had to kind of get over that by educating them about, well, what is the nature of the change that we're talking about and what are your concerns, how can we address those concerns," Ramey said.

The Eugene City Council unanimously approved the updated plan in March 2004 and "if you were to study University-neighbor relations over time you would probably find that that's almost never the case," Ramey said.

Dumond agreed the updated plan was a good one and said it showed the importance of neighbors speaking up when University development may impact their lives.

"I think we all realized if we hadn't yelled a few times it wouldn't have been as satisfactory to us," Dumond said.

## Deciding to decide

Ramey said the current update to the Long Range Campus Development Plan will include added authority to the Campus Planning Committee over off-campus projects, though the level of authority is at the University

president's discretion.

"The new plan does include everything," Ramey said. "If the University owns it, it comes to the planning commission at some level; we're making a decision to make a decision."

Some worry the planning commission may encounter an already concrete plan when it finally gets a chance to add its input, such as the administration's current plans for a basketball arena, but Ramey said that's when committee members must trust that the "big picture" was taken into consideration by those involved with the plan.

"You have to look at all of these things from a big picture point of view: 'Is there a way that this project can proceed and have a way to win, where the donors get what they want and the University doesn't get harmed?'" Ramey said. "And I think that's the President's sense — I hope — is that 'yeah, we can do that. We don't need to inject all our processes on this project.'"

The best way to solidify a working relationship between the East Campus neighborhood and the University lies in "getting to the bottom line of what people are really looking for in terms of a planning solution," Nelson said.

Nelson said it is becoming more important for the city to intervene in the dialogue between the University and the neighborhoods and set ground rules for future interaction.

Ramey agreed it would be helpful if the city had played a larger role in the East Campus plan update but said the city has actually approached the University about studying the plan, and city officials have commended its overall quality.

With the current update to the Long Range Campus Development Plan underway and the success the East Campus plan has seen thus far, Ramey said the outlook for the future of University development is positive.

Williams said the University is not looking to acquire any homes outside of its current property lines but a handful of properties within the zoning boundaries are still owned by other parties with whom the University is in consistent contact.

"We remind them on a regular basis that if they're interested in selling, we're interested in buying," Williams said.

As one of those property owners, Dumond said although he is not currently interested, the few times he "thought about selling they didn't have the money to buy, so nothing happened."

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