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Property: Report urges mixed-use planning

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The University needs to focus on acquiring new property along Franklin Boulevard to complement the land it already has and must work with other area landowners to craft a redevelopment plan that will utilize the area to benefit the University and the city, according to a report from the firm.

The University administration is currently reviewing a draft of a report by the Portland-based consulting firm that makes recommendations about future University planning and land use in the area.

Titled Franklin Boulevard Redevelopment Potential: A Strategy Report for the University of Oregon, the report urges the University to come up with a development plan that utilizes the real estate in order to benefit the city and the University. If it doesn't, other property owners are bound to develop around the University's property, the report said.

Aligning planning and real estate functions at the University is something officials need to consider doing, according to the report.

"While many of the more venture-some institutions have been private universities, public schools are also becoming more entrepreneurial," the report reads.

Possible uses for the Franklin Boulevard properties include housing and parking as well as commercial business use. University officials frequently mention the possibility of housing being built on the Romania site when discussing the reasons for selling Westmoreland Apartments, a 404-unit complex in west Eugene.

The 36-page report details the possibilities for development on other properties in the area, including the block that Hiron drug store and PC Market of Choice occupy and the restaurants on the north side of Franklin. All properties in the area play a crucial role in the overall development of the area, the report says, and turning them into more mixed-use friendly structures would benefit all area landowners.

The report emphasizes the need to get a set plan for the sports arena as soon as possible because the bakery site must be put to use as soon as it is available for University use, which should be sometime this summer.

"The longer the arena is delayed the more other decisions to redevelop will be impacted," the report reads. "... The direction chosen by the university on both the Romania and Williams properties will significantly influence developers of other parcels."

The University will know by the time the site is vacated whether an arena will be built, Moseley said, "or we will say 'we've got to back off and maybe look at other uses for that property.'"

Moseley said the report outlines many things the University is already aware of, such as the importance of making use of the Williams Bakery site as soon as it's vacant in the summer, but it packages them together and makes recommendations that should be very helpful.

A major theme of the report is the concept of mixed-use development, with the Joe Romania car lot and

the state-owned property east of Walnut Street, formerly used by the Oregon Department of Transportation, as targeted sites.

It's essential for the University to do everything it can to acquire the ODOT property or at least work with the city and state to promote redevelopment of the site to support the concept of a mixed-use University village, according to the report.

Moseley said the approximately \$1.2 million gift from long-time athletics department supporter Pat Kilkenny to start schematic design of the arena caused Farkas to change the report to support the idea that an arena is more likely to happen than had previously been thought.

"One of the key factors was trying to get a reality check on the arena," firm leader and former Eugene Planning Director Abe Farkas said. "Just getting a little further on that was very helpful."

Though University graduate Bob Thompson of the architecture firm Thompson Vaivoda and Associates Architects said in October that his firm is exploring the possibility of building the arena in two phases, with the first phase self-contained on just the bakery site, Moseley said acquiring the parcels of land adjacent to the bakery are still part of the overall plan for the area.

Those parcels include a 7-Eleven and a medical building, and Moseley said the cost of the acquisitions has been estimated at about \$2 million.

The current occupants of those buildings could have the option of moving to another location on Franklin as part of a University-owned mixed-use development center.

"I do know there is a necessity to acquire that other property there, and we'll know more about what that will look like as soon as the design (is complete)," Moseley said.

Redeveloping the property only makes sense because the buildings that currently occupy the block don't make the most efficient use of the space, Moseley said.

Moseley said a timeline for development of the area is at least five to 10 years.

"The arena may be the first big piece, or it may be that the arena's a big piece and there may be something along in the Romania and ODOT property," Moseley said.

Though what exactly will be done is unknown, the area east of the University on Franklin Boulevard is in for significant private-public partnership development in the next decade, Moseley said, development that should drastically improve the area and make it much more inviting.

"It's a little grungy over there right now," Moseley said. "This will be a big improvement."

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