

Southwest community divided over park fee increase

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 "a rare opportunity to use an appropriate funding mechanism. It's a way for development to pay for its own impact."

The new Holly Farm Park in West Portland Park "is a great example of the use of SDCs, and the need for an increase." SDC funds paid for 50 percent of the cost of the park's development. "We saved the only piece of undeveloped and almost flat land in a neighborhood of 4,000 people, where 1,000 live in apartment complexes. The need (for additional parks) is much greater than current resources can support."

West Portland Park activist Amanda Fritz, who played a key role in the Holly Farm Park development, argued, "If we don't have enough money for new streets, we can always build them later. If we don't have enough money to purchase park land, by the time we have it it's gone and we can never get it back. Parks provide joy to city residents, and every citizen deserves access to parks." She thanked Saltzman, whom she tried to unseat in the last election, for bringing the proposed increase forward.

Commissioner Randy Leonard was the strongest critic of the proposed charges. "I support SDCs, and have

supported them in the past, but they need to be affordable and defensible." Regarding comparisons to other cities' fee schedules he said, "I don't think we should be at the bottom of the list, and it's inexcusable that businesses should be paying nothing, but I don't think we should be at the top. The best tax is the one someone else pays. The fairest tax is the one everyone pays. This is the least painful to existing Portlanders, but is it the fairest?" Echoing Manning, he said that he had created five new "hydro-parks" on surplus Water Bureau property, including one in Multnomah.

Leonard was also upset about an exemption, available to home buyers earning 100 percent or less of median household income (about \$66,000 a year), that allows them to escape paying any SDCs. "I appreciate all the hard work that's been done, but this needs to be more balanced before I can support this," he said.

In earlier testimony, Sam Chase of the Community Development Network had defended the exemption, saying, "Sadly, this is necessary to provide housing for people who have to choose between paying their rent and paying for food and medicine."



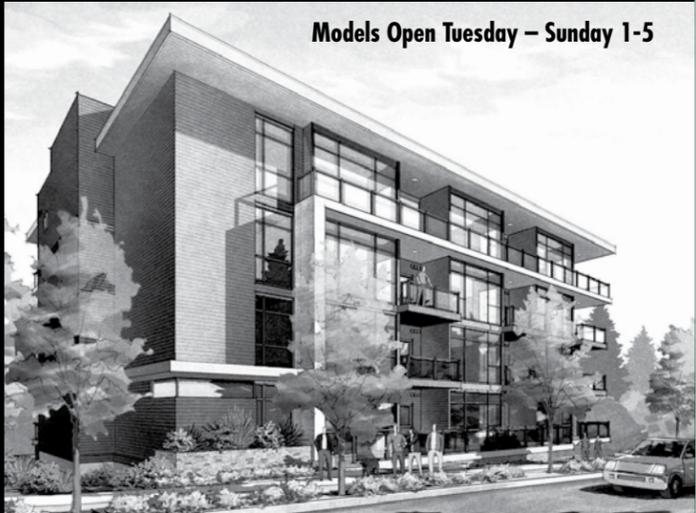
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