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Solar energy, sub-watersheds, and North Macadam transportation

HILLSDALE NOTEBOOK

By Mark Ellis
The Southwest Portland Post

Think renewable energy, and solar power shines brightest. Ethanol is getting a second look, as acreage devoted to food production is swallowed up in the quest for the corn-based fuel.

The idea of wind harnessed electricity seems clean and abundant, but the installations for them can dominate large swaths of local geography. Given the public's deep reservations about possible meltdowns, terrorist attacks, and alarmingly uncontrollable waste, nuclear is increasingly discussed as an option only by energy wonks.

As ethanol gets a second look, townships argue about wind farms, and relics like the old Hanford reactor degrade, solar power advocates are staying on message.

At the June 4 meeting of the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association, Sandra Walden, director and partner with Commercial Solar Ventures, made her pitch. CSV is the developer chosen by Portland Public Schools for a Hillsdale solar installation at Reike Elementary that would provide energy and education for three local schools.

Holding up a representative solar panel, Walden said, "What we're offering is clean energy at a set price at no cost for the installation to the school."

Under the plan, CSV, in conjunction with the Bonneville Energy Foundation, would construct a 100 kilowatt ground-mounted solar panel grid on the grass-covered southwest-facing Bertha Blvd. embankment near Reike and Wilson High.

Walden shared projected images which simulated the proposed installation. Hundreds of solar panels would stretch along the slope, in

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Two-year-old Drew Dunahugh enjoys strawberries as his mother, Heidi, and brother Davis, 5, walk around the Multnomah Village Farmers' Market, June 12. (Post photo by Polina Olsen)

Laughing Planet Café coming soon to Gabriel Park shopping center

By Polina Olsen
The Southwest Portland Post

The background music was XM 74 Bluesville; large divided windows and green plants kept the room light despite rain. As Woodstock's Laughing Planet Café filled with lunchtime diners, founder and co-owner Richard Satnick sat down to talk about the latest venture – a new Southwest Portland location opening in August.

The Laughing Planet and Dinosaur Sanctuary are coming to 4405 SW Vermont St., across from Gabriel Park in the 2200-square-foot space vacated by PB & Ellie's. The quick-service local chain is based on the premise that organic, nutritious food does not belong to the privileged. It should be accessible, affordable, and fun.

"We're parent-friendly as opposed to just kid-friendly," said Satnick as he munched a grilled vegetable and cheese quesadilla and glanced around the room.

Dozens of rubber toy dinosaurs lined the windowsills "kids can bash them up." A bar serving local microbrews backed up to a notice board covered with bicycle events and advertisements for Eckankar workshops. Photographs of individual chimpanzees the restaurant sponsors surround a poster for IDA-Africa.

Teens, local workers, and parents with young children lined up to order burritos, rice-bowls, soups, salads, and dairy-free smoothies. Staff brought food to the comfortable booths and tables when it was ready.

"We start with vegan and build up," explained Satnick about the menu

which includes vegetarian and hormone-free chicken selections. Laughing Planet proudly received the 2008 BEST Award for Sustainable Food Systems. They buy locally and conserve energy by cooking most food in their Mississippi Avenue commissary. One bio-diesel fueled truck delivers fresh to other locations each day.

Satnick, a former mountain-bicycle storeowner, began Laughing Planet in his college town of Bloomington, Indiana. Interested in feeding bicyclists healthy food, he developed a burrito that fit perfectly into bike water bottle holders. "We were horribly under-financed, but after a couple years it became obvious this was working," he said.

Satnick always wanted to live in Portland. "If you're interested in urban planning, Portland shines like a beacon," he said. On a 1989 reconnaissance trip, he spotted the perfect Belmont neighborhood storefront. He moved into the apartment upstairs, brought his toy dinosaur collection for the staff to play with when things got slow, and opened in 2000.

It wasn't until the third restaurant, this time in Eugene, that children became a focus. "That's where the kids started teaching us to do it a little differently," he says. Today, locations include the Woodstock, Northwest 21st, Mississippi, and Belmont areas in Portland and the Whitaker neighborhood in Eugene (they sold the Bloomington, Indiana restaurant to the local manager.) Décor varies, but all locations include a kids menu and posters of Satnick's idol – Frank Zappa.

The new Southwest location will include a large outdoor seating area where Satnick plans raised flowerbeds and heaters for winter diners. Anxious to join the neighborhood, he hopes to hire locally and looks forward to school fund-raisers and community activities.

There are lots of families in the area," Satnick said, noting proximity to the Mittleman Jewish and Southwest community centers. "And, this is food you can live on."

For more information about Laughing Planet, visit www.laughingplanetcafe.com.



Laughing Planet Cafe founder and co-owner Richard Satnick with marketing director Mary Nichols at the Woodstock restaurant. (Post photo by Polina Olsen)

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