



Jim Thayer, of SWHRL, near a lot clear-cut for development at Southwest Cardinell and College drives. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

Southwest Tour

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and very prone to large-scale slides, Dave Johnston said.

At one location on Southwest Fourth Avenue a couple built their "dream house" by the side of the road, only to have it buried by a landslide, Johnston said. The land is now vacant and for sale.

The Johnstons also spoke of the dangers along streets such as Boones Ferry Road, where multiple streets carrying heavy, fast moving traffic come together at intersections that are poorly designed and have poor visibility. Similar problems exist in adjacent neighborhoods such as Arnold Creek, with its "punch and pray" intersection of Southwest Stephenson Street and Boones Ferry Road.

Anton Vetterlein of Homestead concentrated on Terwilliger Boulevard. It is separated from the downtown Park Blocks by a few blocks of pedestrian-unfriendly territory. The entrance to Oregon Health and Sciences University "looms" over Terwilliger in an unbecoming way.

A different issue is that the growth of vegetation has obscured what were once spectacular views; Vetterlein suggested cutting back brush and pruning and selective removal of trees. On the positive side, public and private agencies such as Metro have accumulated 200 acres of land adjacent to Terwilliger that will be kept in permanent open space, including the 38 acres of George Hyams Park.

As several speakers noted, much of southwest lacks anything resembling safe pedestrian walkways on streets. SWNI transportation chair Marianne Fitzgerald complained, "There's not a single arterial street in southwest Portland that has sidewalks along its whole length. There are a dozen plans approved by Council for installing them, and they're all sitting on shelves." A case in point is Capitol Highway, the main route from Multnomah Village to Hillsdale Town Center, where a 1996 master plan that includes sidewalks has yet to be completed. On the brighter side, on Southwest Texas Street, the Portland Office of Transportation agreed to relax its normal standards in the interests of getting the street improved.

There were complaints about the quality of new development. In the Crestwood and Ash Creek areas Southwest Neighborhoods Inc. land

use specialist Leonard Gard pointed out flag lots where additional houses have been squeezed in at the expense of yards, and "skinny houses" installed at double the zoned density and placed very close together.

In the Bridlemile neighborhood, some heavily-wooded terrain has been replaced with subdivisions containing virtually no trees. "These are nice homes, but I have a real issue with the lot coverage," Gibbon said.

On Southwest Upper Road, SWHRL activist Simone Goldfeder feared that a two-acre parcel will become a miniature version of the development Thayer complained of.

A developer proposes to build seven units there, and Goldfeder feared that he will simply clear-cut the property and sell the lots. "We're not opposed to development or infill here," Goldfeder said. "We're concerned about how it's done."

Gibbon and others said they felt new development should be concentrated on arterials such as Barbur Boulevard.

SWNI Trails Committee chair Don Baack spoke at length about the 40 miles of trails he has helped create and his frequent battles with public agencies over their regulations. In one case, he said, he accomplished with \$10,000 a trail improvement that public agencies estimated would cost \$900,000.

"We don't need gold-plated trails," he told the commission. "There are low-cost alternatives. Don't believe what you're told if it doesn't make sense." At Hyams Park he noted that neighbors have been given prizes for keeping invasive species at bay in their own yards.

The tour did not include the South Portland neighborhood. Gibbon said that neighborhood chair Ken Love, who did not accompany the tour, agreed that this area had so many complex issues that it needed a tour of its own.

Gibbon and others pointed out the positive aspects of the Southwest community. They proudly showed off the Southwest Community Center at Gabriel Park, Multnomah Village, Hillsdale Town Center, the Headwaters and Watershed housing projects, and Alpenrose Dairy.

Asked later if the tour was of value to the commission, chair Don Hanson told *The Post*, "Oh, yes. We got to hear about some important issues, from a different perspective."

McMansions

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"That's one of the reasons I'm running for City Council."

Fritz said she believes that compromise is possible. "You can have homes that are big enough for families, and they don't need to cover the entire lot."

Williamson and Carrier stressed they are not anti-development and want to work with developers, although efforts along that line can be discouraging: "A number of builders spoke to the neighborhood association," Williamson said.

He was particularly impressed when one developer's blueprints showed him building around a tree. "Well, that's not what happened, and when we talked to the developer afterwards, he said - 'oh that was just a possibility. I didn't say that was what we were going to build.'"

On the plus side Peter Kusyk of Mariner Development saved trees by moving a garage per the neighborhood's suggestion. "It's always been my policy to work with the neighbors and make whatever neighborhood I go into a better place," Kusyk told *The Post*. "However, everything has a cost."

In this case, the time to redesign and then re-negotiate city approval meant the project scheduled to complete a year ago remains a work in progress.

Building smaller, greener homes also has a cost as proponents readily attest. Still, many hope demand

will increase as a byproduct of high-energy costs. "People are looking for single-story houses to retire into," Williamson said.

"They don't want stairs or to have to manage too much space. In the past, banks were reluctant to finance something green with low square footage but I think that's going to change." Williamson hopes the city will provide tax incentives for green developers.

While Kusyk sympathizes, he finds a dichotomy between buyers' genuine desire for green and value for their money. "There's definitely a market for smaller homes; it's just a limited market," he said. "Most buyers shop for square footage."

According to Kusyk, builders figure the lot will cost 1/3 of the total sales price. If the house's square footage is smaller than comparable new homes, many buyers consider it a poor value. Kusyk believes tax incentives for green buyers rather than builders are key.

Carrier and Williamson remain cautiously optimistic despite Maplewood's rapid change. They see today's building practices as unsustainable. Like Fritz, Carrier foresees a compromise between smaller existing homes and what some call McMansions or Starter Castles.

"This is like rolling more SUVs off the assembly line," she said. "Maybe there's something in the middle where we can spare at least half these trees."

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