

OHSU's planned 20-acre campus in South Waterfront still has some issues

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

Oregon Health and Sciences University is proceeding with plans for their South Waterfront campus, and in so doing encountering some issues. The Schnitzer family has donated 20 acres of land in the previously industrial area to the school to create a new, or satellite, campus to their existing one on Marquam Hill.

OHSU's Mark Williams gave the South Portland Neighborhood Association a progress report on the project last month, with emphasis on what is likely to be the most sensitive aspect of the development - views.

Buildings on the campus will encompass about two million square feet of floor space, he said, and they will be housed in a series of structures that will approach, and in some cases possibly exceed, 250 feet in height, as the code for this part of town calls for.

View corridors will consist of the rights of way of newly-created streets, and even these will have their limitations as far as residents of the older neighborhood to the west are concerned. At the insistence of city planners, east-west streets will align with the river bank rather than with their counterpart streets to

the west; thus residents to the west may not be able to use them to see through to the river.

OHSU probably will not go through a master planning process for the new campus, and will be subject to little public process or regulation other than design review for individual buildings "that I'm aware of," Williams said. "If you're asking, will we try to place our buildings to maximize your views, the answer is yes," he said.

"If you're asking to re-open the zoning code, we're not crazy about that. We've already had that discussion."

Another issue is open space. Williams said school wants lots of open space, "the campus we never had on the hill. We want to have the greenest campus in the country."

In fact, he said, under plans so far the school will have 9,000 square feet more open space than was called for in the South Waterfront Plan. Auto use will be minimized, with a single conventional north-south street and east-west ways given over largely to pedestrians and bikes.

This didn't satisfy Jerry Ward, longtime neighborhood activist and South Portland's representative to the North Macadam Urban Renewal Advisory Committee. He told the South Portland board that the South Waterfront Plan called for two acres

of park land on the northern end, and as far as he was concerned this did not mean a series of plazas for OHSU.

"I don't care if the public is allowed there; I wouldn't feel comfortable being there," Ward said. "We need to get them to honor 10 years of planning." South Portland board member Jim Gardner pointed out that the campus only occupied about half of the northern part of the district, and that a two-acre park somewhere else would satisfy the requirement.

The campus, like the rest of South Waterfront, will have a 100-foot

wide greenway west of the river bank, Williams said. According to long-term plans, he said, "This will be the most habitat-intensive part of the greenway. It won't be a place for people to tromp around in." He added, "This is the city's plan. Whether it gets built or not is not our call."

Williams said that the campus, except for classrooms, will be "quasi-public" space which people in the neighborhoods will be able to use. In the same spirit, the ground floors of some of the buildings may be given over to retail services that could serve the larger communities.

Hamilton Street Sidewalks

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neighbors have seen them develop into institutions.

Apparently, vague zoning laws cannot prevent teardowns of existing older homes in order to build facilities expressly for adult foster care. These can cause traffic issues and change the neighborhood character. Everyone agreed on the need and desire for housing for the elderly.

The Bridlemile Neighborhood As-

sociation hopes to work with the city to better define zoning laws and find solutions where the whole community including foster care residents benefit.

Tanya Ghattas, the new Bridlemile Elementary School principal stopped by to say hello. Formerly principal at Winterhaven, a focus magnate program in Southeast Portland, she started at Bridlemile on July 1. A Johns Landing resident, she knows and enjoys Southwest Portland and is looking forward to working with the Bridlemile community.

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