

City budget forum survey says 83 percent favor dividing resources according to need

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

If judged by a recent City budget forum, most folks in Southwest would rather see the most City funds go to the neediest areas, rather than divided up equally.

That was one of the main messages of a forum held on March 1 at Wilson High School, one of two staged by the City. More than 100 people attended and, based on an electronic survey, 49 percent came from Southwest, which represents just 20 percent of the city's population.

Andrew Scott of the Bureau of Financial Planning said that Oregon appears to be in recovery from the recession, but that it is projected to be "a long, slow recovery."

As a result, the City's "public safety" bureaus – Fire and Police – have been instructed to prepare budgets with a 0.75 percent cut, while all others are being asked to cut 1.5 percent. "We're looking for things you may be willing to let go of," he told the audience.

This year, for the first time, the City is tracking both revenue and public expenditures by its seven neighborhood coalition areas, Scott said. Since the areas have different populations, the

data is presented in terms of per capita intake and outflow. "We've never done this before, and it's extremely difficult," Scott said.

In terms of revenues, "The west side tends to pay more," Scott said. To no one's surprise, he noted that East Portland and Southwest lead in the number of unimproved streets. The survey also measured proximity to services such as parks, police and fire protection. "This is not just about dollars, but need," Scott said.

Those present obviously agreed. As one item on an electronic survey, 83 percent said the City should divide its resources so as to give most to those most in need, rather than dividing funds equally among all areas.

In discussions during the sessions, the lack of pedestrian facilities was a common theme. One woman noted that Southwest has more parks and open space than some other areas, but parents fear to let their children walk to them.

Mayor Sam Adams and Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Randy Leonard attended the session, and Adams acted as master of ceremonies. Fritz, a mother of three, recalled, "I spent eight happy years as a parent here. I had to call my daughter to be reminded of the fight songs." Scott said that Adams would publish a draft budget in April.



City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, ONI Director Amalia Alarcon, and SWNI Program Manager Leonard Gard at the Budget Forum at Wilson High School. (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

Safeway seeks zone change for expansion

Safeway plans to build a new, expanded "lifestyle" supermarket on the site of its existing store (located at Southwest Barbur Boulevard and Capitol Hill Road) and an adjacent residential lot. To do so, they will need a hard-to-get Portland Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

According to Safeway's Dan Floyd, the chain plans to tear down the existing store and build an entirely new structure. This will be approximately 40 to 50,000 square feet – larger than the new Pearl and Downtown stores but not quite as large as the two-story mega-store on Northeast 122nd Avenue, Floyd said.

The new supermarket will include expanded prepared food, floral, meat and seafood offerings, he said. The store will cover most of the expanded site, with underground parking, Floyd said.

A potential stumbling block is securing approval for development on the residential property. This will require a Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment, the most difficult and expensive land use approval to obtain. As part of the process Safeway will have to satisfy the City's No Net Loss Housing Policy.

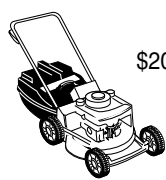
This policy calls for the housing development potential on the residential parcel – rather than the houses actually sitting there – to be replaced somewhere else in town, either by rezoning a non-residential property for residential use or by increasing the zoning density of a residential property.

Floyd said Safeway is confident that the process can be accomplished, and that he hopes the new supermarket will be under construction by the end of the year.

--Lee Perlman

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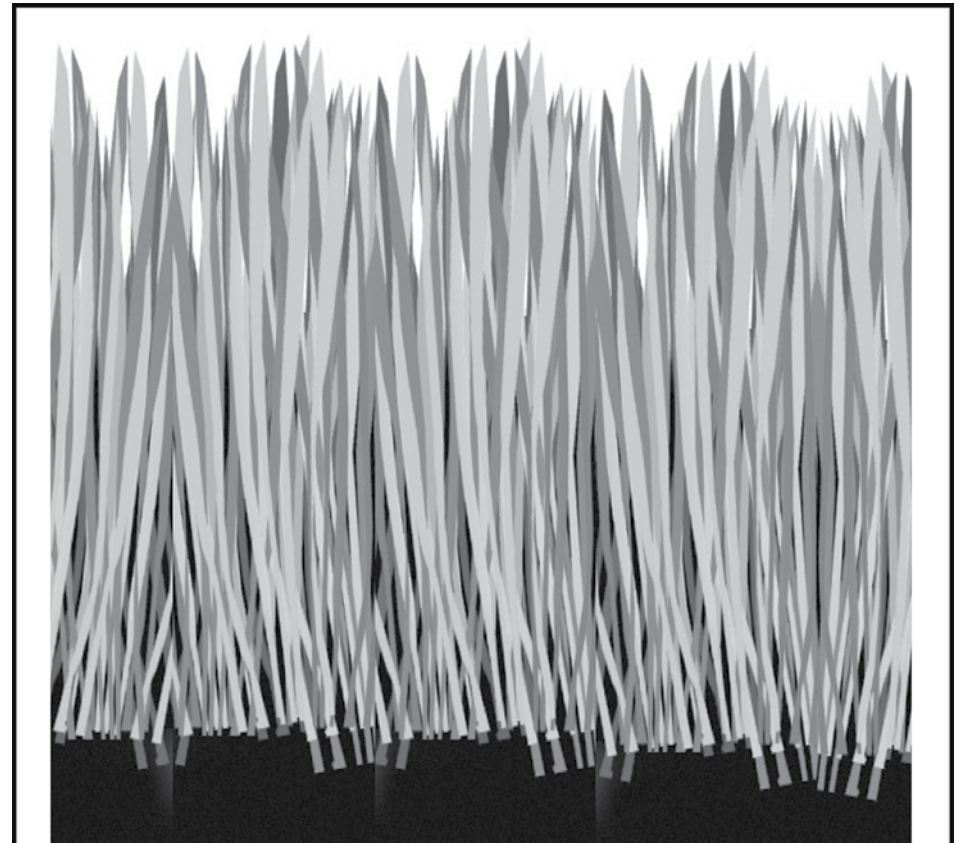
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