

Richard Stein's proposed food carts fire up Hillsdale residents

By Jillian Daley
The Southwest Portland Post

At the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting on June 6, Richard Stein discussed his proposed food cart development. Most of the crowd of 40 people attended to hear Stein, leaving as soon as his presentation was over.

"Last November, I came here and floated the idea of the possibility of bringing some food carts to the Hillsdale neighborhood," said Stein, a developer and architect.

"And, over the past five months, that idea has continued to develop, and now a design has been worked on and is ready. So I've come back again and show you what I have in mind – and field your thoughts and questions."

Stein had to field plenty of questions about his proposed four-cart development on the southeast corner of Southwest Sunset Boulevard and Capitol Highway. The discussion, scheduled for 30 minutes, lasted for more than an hour.

The plan is to have three carts in place by the beginning of August, adding two more within the next year. "Will the food be healthy?" asked Corinne Paulson, a neighborhood association board member.

Part of the inspiration for the project was to provide high-quality food during lunchtime for high school students and to create a place for the community to socialize in the afternoons and evenings, Stein said.



Richard Stein on June 6 presented a design for a plan to place a cluster of food carts at the corner of Southwest Capitol Highway and Southwest Sunset Boulevard. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

"Will they look good?" asked Glenn Bridger, also a neighborhood association board member. "I have never seen an attractive food cart."

The project will be "aesthetically pleasing" with a trellised walk and landscaping out front, Stein said. To cut back on paper trash, vendors will use a token exchange system of reusable plastic dishes. This is the same "Go Box" downtown Portland food carts use. Two portable toilets and hand-washing facilities will be tucked away behind a screen.

Southwest Crime Prevention Program coordinator Stefanie Adams asked if he intended to get a liquor license.

"There is no intention," Stein said. "I

think that has a lot of complications."

Hillsdale Neighborhood resident Jason Miner asked if the food cart sites were being leased and if Stein was the manager.

"I am leasing the property from the owner, and the vendors will be leasing their carts from me," Stein said.

Stein, who has lived in Hillsdale for 22 years, will be paying for the improvements himself. He said he cares about the community, so it is a good investment, and he has figured out how to get his money back "eventually."

One cart will offer tacos only and will not be competing with Casa Colima, a nearby Mexican restaurant and cantina, Stein said.

"We are being very careful not to compete," he said. "How so?" asked Alonso Ochoa, manager of Casa Colima.

Stein told Ochoa he gave Casa Colima the first chance to have its own cart in the Hillsdale food cart court, and the restaurant turned it down. He added that the sit-down restaurant has a full menu, far different from a taco cart.

Several potential food cart operators were in attendance, including Violetta owner Dwayne Beliakoff, who would serve up locally sourced beef and sweet potato fries. Matt Feiner said his cart would dish up sweet and savory waffles. Gary Evans said he didn't wish to divulge what his cuisine could be.

Meals will cost about \$6-\$8 with \$2-\$4 menu options for students.

A couple of other neighbors asked about security and crime, and one man suggested a good neighbor agreement

as a possible remedy. Stein said he would be amenable to that arrangement but deferred questions on such an agreement to Adams.

"Such an agreement is not legally binding but would keep the owner and neighbors in direct communication when problems arose," Adams said.

Though not all feedback was positive, Stein took the Hillsdale residents' interest in the project as a good sign. "It is a great thing this community is talking about it and concerned," he said.

Many of the questions area residents asked at the meeting have been posted on the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association website: www.hna-pdx.com. Stein said on June 20 that he planned to post his answers online.

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