

French school seeks to expand; Age-friendly designation proceeds

HILLSDALE NOTEBOOK

By Jillian Daley
The Southwest Portland Post

Hillsdale Neighborhood Association residents learned at a meeting last month that L'Etoile French Immersion School aims to move into the Fulton Park Community Center this year.

The French school, which presented its plans at the meeting, has applied for a conditional use permit to move some of its students into the community center at 68 S.W. Miles St.

L'Etoile School, which has 58 students, wants to move its 12 first- and second-graders to Fulton Park.

This will open up space for the kindergarteners and preschoolers at the school's current home at 5839 SW Hood Ave., said school operations director, Seema Kathuria in an interview with The Post in late October.

Kathuria plans to add one higher grade per year until the school reaches the fifth grade.

The French school needs a conditional use permit because the community center is in a zone usually allowing ages 5 and younger, not first to fifth graders. The permit creates an exception, Kathuria said.

Kathuria said that during and after a Nov. 5 public hearing, people will have an opportunity to comment on whether they approve of the school. No one has taken issue so far, and she expects to be



Fulton Park Community Center. (Courtesy of Portland Parks and Recreation)

able to move in this December. She loves the space and sees a future there.

The Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation previously held some of its own programs at the Fulton Park Community Center before they were discontinued because of budget cuts, although the bureau still rents out space at the center affording L'Etoile School a place to grow.

Hillsdale Walkability Audit and age-friendly certification

Also at the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting, Alan DeLaTorre, a Portland State University instructor who is the project manager for Portland's Age-Friendly Cities Project, discussed the Hillsdale Walkability Audit. The audit will help pinpoint what needs to be done to make Hillsdale the first Portland neighborhood designated as age-friendly.

An age-friendly certification involves improvements such as: making doors easier to open; providing places to rest;

improving lighting to help prevent crime; and making places easier to navigate for those with vision trouble. The designation has other benefits.

"I think (an age-friendly certification) would be some good marketing for Hillsdale," said neighborhood association chairman Mikal Apenes in late October.

The project is part of a larger city effort to make Portland more age-friendly that's been going on for years. Hillsdale was chosen to be a part of that effort because of its strong transit system, major artery in the form of Southwest Capitol Highway and thriving residential and business communities, DeLaTorre explained in a late October interview.

One milestone of the local project came at a May 2 Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting when Hillsdale Main Street executive director Megan Braunsten and Elders in Action volunteer Will Fuller announced a part-

nership between their groups to further the age-friendly certification effort for the neighborhood.

Neighborhoods compete for small grants

Hillsdale neighbors discussed the 2012-2013 Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.'s Small Grants Program. Grant awards are \$200-\$2,000 apiece, and a grand total of \$10,020 is available to the 16 neighborhoods this year.

There was \$20,000 available last year, Apenes said. Hillsdale neighbors are seeking a grant for a three-level water fountain at DeWitt Park

Mary Rieke Elementary School representatives also told neighbors they will submit a grant to support their green schools program. According to Apenes, Hillsdale is going to write a letter in support of this particular grant application.

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