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Ashcreek's Dean Smith is a neighborhood leader wherever he goes

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

When Dean Smith accepted a Spirit of Portland Neighborhood of the Year award for his Ashcreek Neighborhood Association in October, he told the Port-

land City Council, "When I first moved in three years ago, I thought that this would be a sleepy little neighborhood. In fact it's dynamic and very effective."

Smith is in a unique position to make such a judgment. Not only has he lived elsewhere, but he served as chair of the Goose Hollow Foothills League and

Irvington Community Association. He was also project manager of the first Central City Plan.

Born and raised in California, Smith moved with his family to the Hillsdale area when he reached "college age."

He lived downtown and in Goose Hollow while attending Portland State University. He lived in two different locations in Goose Hollow in the 1970s, and served as their chair.

Smith moved to Southeast Portland for awhile but, in 1985, moved again to Irvington with his wife Laura, and served as their chair as well.

In 2009 the couple looked to move again, to accommodate Laura's daily commute to Wilsonville and to "downsize" after their children moved out. According to Smith, Ashcreek friends told them of a new infill housing project happening a block away, and they took advantage of it.

It is a dramatic change from his previous homes, Smith told *The Post*. "Goose Hollow has some very large buildings and is very close to downtown, with a lot of traffic and a lot of businesses."

According to Smith, "Irvington is further from downtown, but it's still more urban, with an older housing stock.

Both places have fully developed streets and sidewalks, and there's not much opportunity for infill development."

"Ashcreek is quiet and almost entirely residential. It still has open spaces for infill. There are different issues: storm water runoff is a problem; there are a lot of under-developed streets, and most don't have sidewalks."

Moreover, Smith said, economic and political considerations work against a quick and easy solution.

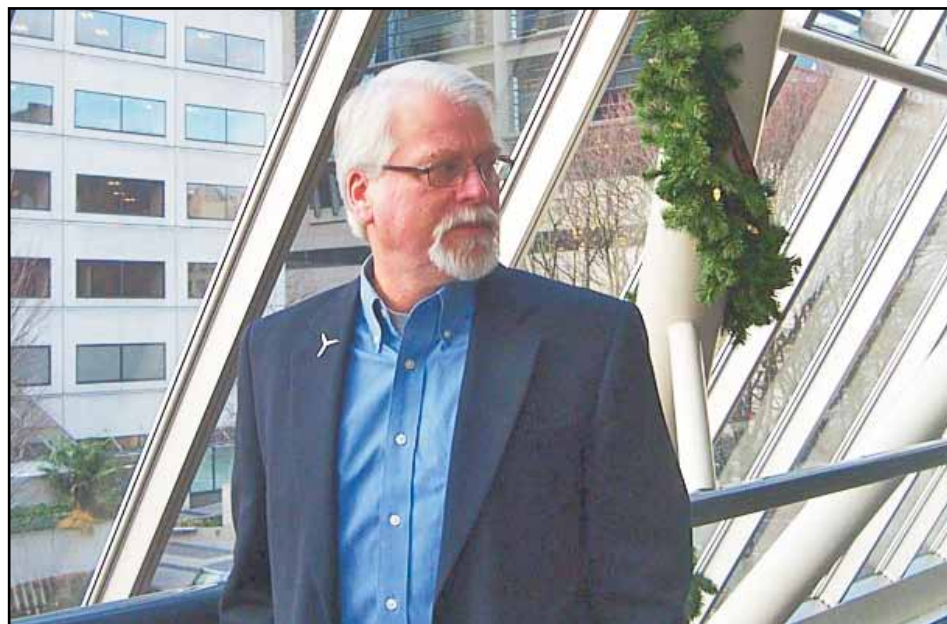
"To provide infrastructure would eat up an enormous amount of the City budget," he said. "It appears City government tends to lesser-cost projects where they can see more bang for the buck."

Another issue may be the perception that Ashcreek, like the rest of Southwest, is rich enough to take care of its own problems. Smith said that isn't so.

"There are some expensive houses here, but most are fairly modest, with a lot of 1940s and 1950s ranch-style homes. This isn't Eastmoreland or Irvington or Alameda."

What has been comparable in all his homes, Smith said, is the level of neighborhood activity. "I was frankly

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Dean Smith is chair of the Ashcreek Neighborhood Association.
(Post photo by Lee Perlman)

Maplewood woman wants to make peace with neighbor who kidnapped her dog

By Jillian Daley
The Southwest Portland Post

A Maplewood woman wants to make peace with a neighbor charged with kidnapping her dog and turning him into Multnomah County's Animal Control.

Paula Ripke, 50, who lives in the 7000 block of Southwest 54th Avenue, says about a year and a half ago she found a note on her door complaining that her Miniature Pinscher, Sparky, barked incessantly and was being neglected.

Ripke spoke with neighbors about her dog, and no one told her the dog was a problem. But the notes continued. Other neighbors told Ripke they had received similar notes.

Sparky usually played in the front yard, tethered to a zip line because the Ripke home has a small back yard. On July 5, Ripke's two children were spending the day with her nieces, and they decided to go out for lunch. The weather was fine, so they left Sparky outside, and when they returned two hours later, he was gone.

Notes in which someone threatened

to take the dog had been left in the mailbox and taped to the door, Ripke said.

Ripke called the police, canvassed neighbors, posted fliers, trying to find any hint of Sparky's whereabouts. Some neighbors said they saw an older, heavyset woman with the pooch.

Days later, her nephew spotted a dog on the Multnomah County Animal Services website that looked a lot like Sparky. Ripke realized her pup had been found and brought him home.

Ripke told Portland Police Officer Scott Foster the news, and soon after, he was able to identify a suspect. People who turn in a dog to animal control must give their name and show identification.

Sheila Gayle Yates, 58, of the 7000 block of Southwest 53rd Avenue, was arrested on July 25 on a charge of first-degree theft, Portland police Sgt. Pete Simpson said. Yates is not currently in police custody.

At press time, her case was scheduled for a settlement conference on Dec. 21 at Multnomah County Courthouse, during which attorneys were



Paula Ripke's son, Daniel Ben-Israel, holds Sparky in his arms on a chilly December afternoon in the front yard of the family home in Southwest Portland.
(Post photo by Jillian Daley)

seeking to reach an agreement on behalf of their clients.

Yates said she preferred not to comment on the court case.

"I just want to have a peaceful settlement conference and just move on from there," she said. "That's my goal. I'm a lover, not a fighter."

Ripke said she never considered Yates as a suspect because she had worked with her on a professional basis through her job with the county and thought they were on good terms.

She does not want Yates to have a felony blemishing her record, so she asked the district attorney and the defense attorney to come up with a way for Yates to plead to a lesser charge but would give Ripke recourse if a similar incident occurred again. A civil

compromise could be in the works, Ripke said.

"We're not out for vengeance," she said. "We don't want to make anybody miserable, but we also want to have some reassurance."

She no longer leaves Sparky outside when no one is home to watch him.

Foster brought the incident to neighbors' attention when he gave his report on public safety issues in the Maplewood Neighborhood Association meeting on Nov. 14

Simpson, the police public information officer, said Portland has a potent pet culture.

"People are very passionate about animals, and there are both people who love them and people who don't like to hear them," Simpson said.

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