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news BY ALAN PITTMAN

PeaceHealth wants a
sprawling new hospital.



Sprawl Hits the Wall

PeaceHealth left with few options after
Court of Appeals ruling.

The Oregon Court of Appeals ruling against PeaceHealth June 9 appears to leave the hospital with few easy options in its plans for a massive complex on the banks of the McKenzie River on the outskirts of Springfield.

The court ruled against PeaceHealth and its squad of attorneys — some of the most expensive in the state — and said the hospital plan failed to meet land use and transportation rules.

On land use the court found that the hospital could not build its huge facility on land zoned residential. To get around the ruling PeaceHealth has five apparent options:

- Change the local metropolitan plan to allow such large-scale hospital development in residential areas. This would likely require the approval of both Lane County commissioners and the Eugene City Council. Many of the elected officials on the two bodies have expressed opposition to moving the hospital from downtown to the edge of the urban growth boundary.

- Change the local metropolitan plan to rezone PeaceHealth's land to commercial. This would also likely require Eugene and Lane County approval and would also face similar opposition. In addition, to balance available land in the region, other property may have to be down-zoned from commercial to residential.

- Dramatically scale down PeaceHealth's plans for a hospital complex to fit requirements that it be an "auxiliary" use to the residential zoning. PeaceHealth officials have shown little willingness to reduce the height or size of their hospital complex.

- Change state law. PeaceHealth can use its big revenue surpluses to pay for top lobbyists. But the state's leading corporate fixer, Neil Goldschmidt, is now unavailable due to a sex scandal.

- Pick another site for the hospital or return to earlier plans to expand at PeaceHealth's current site. PeaceHealth has already reportedly invested over \$20 million in the RiverBend site, largely in providing profits to land speculator John Musumeci, and may be unwilling to give up.

On transportation issues the court found that PeaceHealth must mitigate traffic impacts before completing its hospital. To get around this ruling PeaceHealth has seven apparent options:

- Change regional transportation plans to quickly build more roads to serve PeaceHealth's development plans. This would require Eugene and county approval and would likely require the cancellation of many, if not most, other planned road projects in the region to fund roads for PeaceHealth's sprawl plan.

- Change regional transportation plans to allow more congestion to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes. This would only work if far north Springfield had a dedicated bus or light rail corridor that could jump around cars stuck in traffic. There is no funding or plans to immediately extend Bus Rapid Transit to serve PeaceHealth. It's also uncertain how alternative modes could successfully serve such sprawling development on the edge of town.

- Dramatically scale down the huge hospital complex to reduce its impact. Same problems of PeaceHealth opposition.

- Change PeaceHealth's hospital plan to dramatically lessen car use by increasing alternative modes. Again, it's unclear how alternative modes would succeed on a site near a freeway on the edge of town.

- Change state law. There's no Goldschmidt to help, but PeaceHealth may have the backing of the League of Oregon Cities. PeaceHealth reportedly paid for the League to hire Eugene's city attorney to write a brief supporting the hospital on land use issues (see *EW* news story March 11).

- Pick another site for the hospital or return to earlier plans to expand at PeaceHealth's current site. A downtown site closer to existing alternative modes, road infrastructure and hospital users would cause far fewer transportation problems, but PeaceHealth has so far refused to consider less sprawling options.

- Pay tens of millions of dollars to fund the construction of additional road capacity that will be ready by the time the hospital opens. PeaceHealth has so far refused to pay for its full traffic impact. The cost of this option could be reduced by PeaceHealth redoing its traffic analysis to claim additional alternative mode use and/or less traffic. But such a move might face legal challenge.

PeaceHealth does have another option to all this: simply appeal the Appeals Court ruling. But last time the hospital appealed, its legal problems only got worse. **EW**