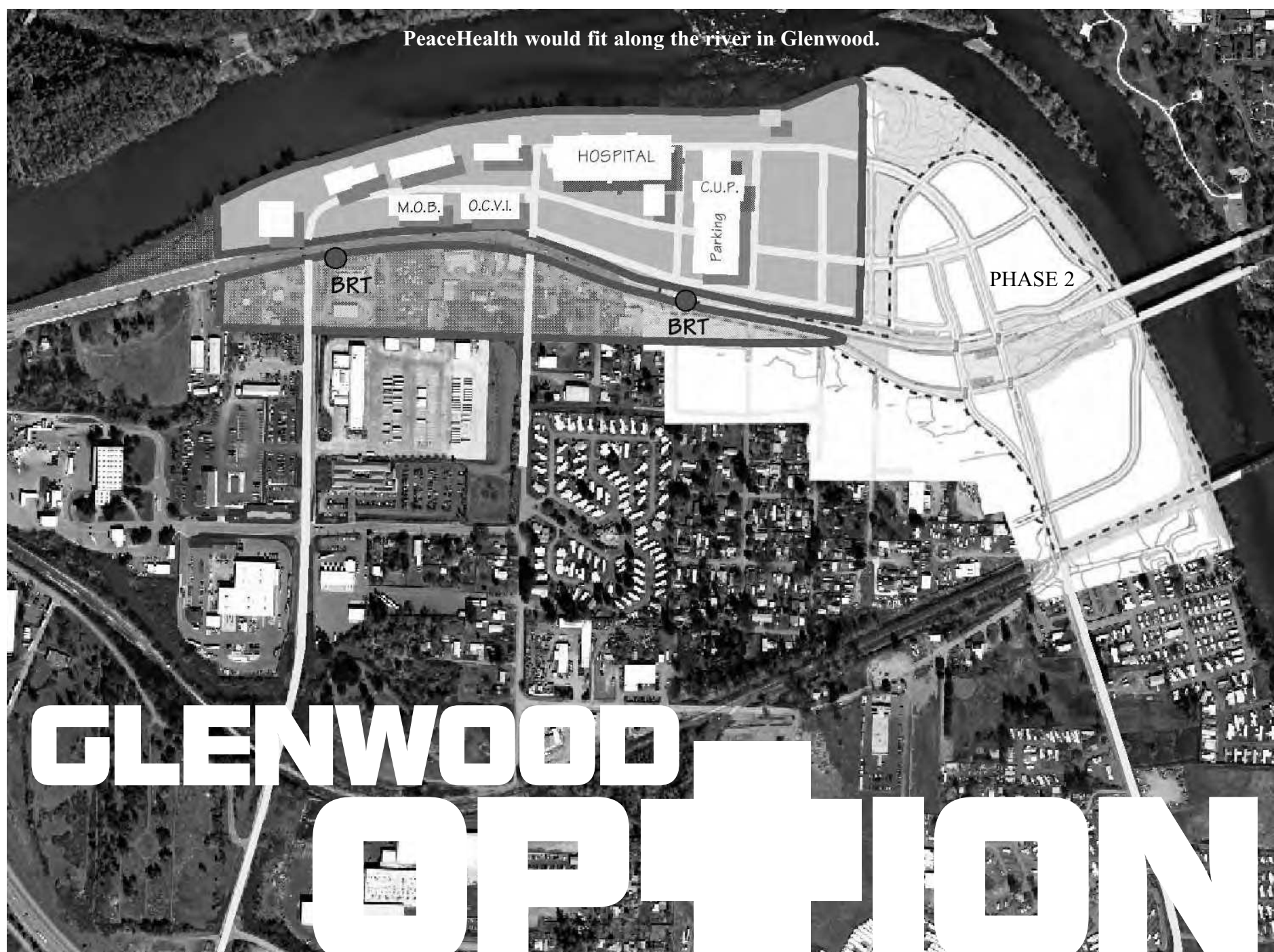




PeaceHealth would fit along the river in Glenwood.

Hospital proposal offers win-win for PeaceHealth and community. BY ALAN PITTMAN

In the past three years of pushing its controversial plan to move PeaceHealth hospital from downtown Eugene to the pristine banks of the McKenzie River in far north Springfield, hospital officials have argued that RiverBend is their only option for a new hospital.

But now, a citizen group has presented a detailed plan for an alternative to the sprawl-inducing RiverBend site — build the hospital at a different river bend just down the street from Eugene's downtown, in Glenwood.

PeaceHealth officials have balked at the Glenwood option citing a host of obstacles. But the Glenwood Option, Inc. group has responses to them all, save perhaps the biggest hurdle, actually convincing PeaceHealth to change its plans.

HURDLES

In an e-mail to his staff Oct. 29, PeaceHealth CEO Alan Yordy said the hospital had already examined the Glenwood riverfront in 2001 and had rejected it for a variety of reasons including: insufficient sewers, difficulty acquiring land, inadequate transportation facilities, possible soil contamination, uncertain effect on its Cottage Grove Hospital, need to realign Franklin Boulevard, expense, uncertainty, delay, insufficient room to expand, land use laws and quality of health care.

"We don't want to simply ignore the proposal, but we have to be realistic," says

PeaceHealth spokesman Brian Terrett.

Authors of the Glenwood Option report include local planning and economics consultant Terry Moore of ECONorthwest, local architect Otto Poticha and local landscape architect Jerry Diethelm. John and Robin Jaqua, long-time opponents of the scale of RiverBend, paid for the study. The Glenwood Option group offers responses to all of PeaceHealth's stated concerns:

Sewers — A main sanitary sewer line will be installed down Franklin Boulevard by 2005 with completion expected by next year. Storm sewers could be installed as part of the hospital development, including an attractive

riverfront wetland park that would filter contaminants. RiverBend also lacks sewers.

Acquiring Land — Riverfront land for a Glenwood hospital is in multiple ownership. But owners may be happy to sell for the right price. Land for a hospital could be worth as much as eight times more than its current light industrial uses, according to Moore. For the few owners who refuse to sell for a fair price, condemnation is an option with a jury deciding appropriate compensation. While potentially controversial, condemnation has been used successfully by urban renewal districts in many cities to assemble land and revitalize blighted areas such as Glenwood.

Roscoe Divine, a local developer and member of the Glenwood Options group, says he has great respect for property rights, but thinks Glenwood owners could be tempted to sell. "There's some people that would not like to sell, but they don't know what the price is now."

An optional hillside site in Glenwood offers fewer owners to negotiate with as well as attractive views and I-5 visibility.

Transportation — As part of building a new I-5 bridge over the Willamette, officials have said they will examine the possibility of an interchange to connect Franklin Boulevard to I-5. The

major hospital project could provide the impetus to make the interchange a reality. The site already has some access to I-5 and is served by Franklin, a state highway. In addition, LTD plans to serve the area with frequent bus rapid transit starting construction next year. Unlike RiverBend's location on the urban fringe, the centralized location of Glenwood offers far shorter commutes and emergency trips for most of the area's population. Most of Eugene and Springfield is within a 10-minute drive.

Contamination — There is a possibility that some of the light industrial land in Glenwood could be contaminated. State and federal help may be available to help clean up any brownfield problems.

Cottage Grove Hospital — PeaceHealth's hospital in Cottage Grove receives extra federal funding as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) at least 20 miles away from another hospital. The Glenwood site is 19 miles away. But federal officials have assured Cottage Grove that a Glenwood hospital shouldn't jeopardize CAH funding for Cottage Grove's hospital.

Franklin Realignment — Realigning Franklin would provide more room along the riverfront for PeaceHealth. ODOT appears open to the idea and has already talked about the need to straighten