to Ferry Street where the EWEB site is wider, he says. That would allow the trench on the riverside to go straight instead of making a 90 degree turn at a concrete wall after crossing under the tracks. A wider underpass at that location could also provide room for the millrace, Diethelm says.

Paving the Riverfront

North of the tracks, Friends of Eugene President Kevin Matthews says he's concerned Triad will create an ugly wall of hospital buildings and parking lots and roadways destroying views and a chance for a natural riverfront.

"We need to have a public, natural riverfront," Matthews says. Instead of tearing down EWEB's historic steam plant building, the city should refurbish it as a "fabulous" museum, he says. The giant "slab" construction and "grotesque suburban office park stuff" envisioned by Triad violates the city's downtown plan, which never envisioned such large-scale development of the riverfront site, Matthews says.

Some citizens have called for a wide new riverfront park on the EWEB land. A bond measure and money saved from Triad incentives could fund such a park. Citizens would essentially be buying the park land from themselves, since they also own EWEB. Many cities are moving toward removing riverfront concrete to build popular parks, rather than paving more riverside.

Bettman says the city has offered to buy and protect riparian land along the river. She says she would favor acquiring a 200-ft.-wide strip, although it's unclear if Triad would allow that.

EWEB's fountain has become a symbol of the public utility.

Despite almost a year of controversy, the city has yet to hold a public hearing and Triad has yet to release any detailed site plans for the area that would make it clear how far buildings would be set back and how much of the riverfront would remain natural. Orr says Triad has no plans to offer a site plan until it has a done deal acquiring the property.

Diethelm says that's too late. "To me that's irresponsible," he says of the city and Triad's failure to give the public a clear vision of the hospital plan that they can comment on and influence. "You only have one riverfront."

Options

As an alternative to building on the riverfront, critics say Triad should consider building its hospital at 2nd Avenue and Chambers Street, downtown in parking lots surrounding the old Eugene clinic or in Glenwood.

The 2nd and Chambers site offered a central location, easy road access and little opposition. But Bettman says Triad rejected the industrial site early because it's ugly and not near existing downtown medical offices.

Matthews says Triad would easily fit in the downtown site, originally offered to PeaceHealth, a hospital twice as big.

Diethelm says Triad would help improve and revitalize the current industrialized Glenwood riverfront. An upland Glenwood site also offers excellent I-5 access and visibility, he says.

Some critics have said Glenwood wouldn't satisfy the need for Eugene to have its own hospital. But Glenwood is on this side of the river and close to south Eugene. Diethelm says, "We probably ought to be at the point where we talk about the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area and stop worrying about that" inter-city rivalry.

Orr says the EWEB land remains Triad's top choice. The site is in single ownership, large enough, and close to downtown and existing physician offices, he says. "There's so many positives about the site."

But with the high public costs in subsidies and natural riverfront, there's little citizen outcry for giving Triad EWEB's land and city subsidies, even from big supporters of a downtown hospital.

City Councilor Betty Taylor, one of the council's more consistent environmental votes, says she wants a hospital downtown, but the riverfront impact has given her pause. "I'm ambivalent."

Diethelm says he also agrees that the city needs a downtown hospital, "but does that mean that we would just do anything?" ■

'You put that trench in there, and there's no way to put a millrace in.' — Landscape architect Jerry Diethelm

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