

Some of the spaces in the newly constructed parking lot on Riverfront Parkway could be used for 1700 Millrace, according to Connecting Eugene



ALLEN HANCOCK

ORI PARKING ISSUE LINGERS

The battle over the Oregon Research Institute (ORI) building plans for Riverfront Research Park is still more of a fight over parking than over a building, but the possibility exists that a new site at 1700 Millrace Drive will satisfy all sides on the issue of the new building's location.

The proposed new research park building and parking lot has been slated to be built right on the Willamette River, an arrangement that stems from a 20-year-old master plan for development that opponents Connecting Eugene call outdated.

ORI is a behavioral research center doing research on public health and human wellbeing, and it has argued the planned building is sustainable development and incorporates green building techniques such as bioswales and recycled materials.

Connecting Eugene calls for more ecological as well as people-oriented uses of the riverfront than an office building and parking lot. In early May, UO President Richard Lariviere issued a statement saying the UO is considering an alternative location at 1700 Millrace Drive and ordered a feasibility study be conducted.

Kathryn Madden, ORI's media contact says, "We were pleased and surprised when the 1700 Millrace parcel became available as a possible location for the ORI/EPIC building. We look forward to a positive outcome as the UO and Trammel Crow explore the feasibility of the site."

According to Allen Hancock of Connecting Eugene, parking may still be one of the UO's hang-ups. The new building must meet Eugene city code for number of parking spaces for an office building. The current ORI plan for the riverfront location calls for 200 parking spots. "That's the reason for the insistence on the number of parking spaces on the originally proposed riverfront development," says Hancock.

But he says, "We have spent time on the ground and looking at maps looking for a solution for what has been called the 'parking problem'" for the new location. Last week Connecting Eugene sent the UO, ORI and developer Trammel Crow a letter offering 10 ways to address the parking issues at 1700 Millrace Drive. Hancock says, "There's really no reason not to build at this alternate location, and we hope this letter will drive that point home."

He also says that ORI could approach the Eugene City Council for a variance on the parking compliance and that the Millrace location is "from a transit perspective, a great location" as it's very close to the EmX bus rapid transit. The controversial riverfront location, he says, would require walking two-thirds of a mile and crossing railroad tracks and multiple lanes of traffic to catch a bus.

The riverfront site also faces a legal challenge. Connecting Eugene filed a brief with the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) seeking a public hearing for a determination of whether the proposed ORI building complies with the terms and conditions of the research park's conditional use permit that was approved through a public process in 1989.

Hancock says Connecting Eugene is also excited about the possibility of 1700 Millrace Drive as a new location for ORI and Lariviere's feasibility study "is good news, but until they withdraw their building permit for the riverfront site we're pursuing our legal challenge." He says the UO's own brief is due June 8.

— Camilla Mortensen

news Briefs

VA SPRAWL A VIOLATION?

The Veteran's Administration may be violating federal law in giving apparent preference for a new clinic site that promotes urban sprawl rather than downtown redevelopment.

The VA this month issued a request for proposals requiring a sprawling 13-acre site with 685 parking spaces for its planned new 200-employee clinic. Those criteria appear to favor greenfield sites on the edge of town and rule out the old medical clinic site at 13th and Willamette in downtown Eugene that city officials had hoped the VA would choose.

But federal Executive Order 12072 requires that "the process for meeting federal space needs in urban areas shall give first consideration to a centralized community business area." The order says "federal facilities and federal use of space in urban areas shall serve to strengthen the nation's cities and to make them attractive places to live and work." The order requires "serious consideration" of social and environmental impacts of siting decisions.

Numerous federal studies have documented the impact of urban sprawl on exhaust pollution, natural areas, livability and expensive traffic congestion. Ironically for a hospital, studies have also shown that urban sprawl has a big impact on public health by increasing obesity and respiratory diseases such as asthma. Eugene data shows that driving multiplies with distance from the city core, which is served by the region's main transit terminal and walkable and bikeable from housing for a large part of the region's population.

But whether federal officials will comply with the federal order from 1978 is uncertain. The IRS balked at the order and moved its offices out of central Fresno, Calif., and the BLM and Forest Service have moved to offices on the edge of Springfield. But in 2004 Albuquerque won an appeals court decision in a case calling for the Interior Department to follow the anti-sprawl order. — Alan Pittman

SAVE TRAPPER? TRAPPER SAVED!

After years of protests and court battles, the Trapper timber sale has been stopped — for now — by a U.S. District Court decision on May 24. Seneca timber has been fighting to log the 155 acres of pristine old-growth trees in the McKenzie River watershed, and groups including Cascadia Wildlands, Cascadia Forest Defenders and Oregon Wild have been

fighting back. The sale was first proposed in 1998 and sold to Seneca in 2003.

Trapper's trees provide habitat for red tree voles, the food of choice for endangered species listed northern spotted owls, and the sale is located in the watershed that provides Eugene with its drinking water.

The campaign to halt Trapper was "a broad coalition of groups and it included direct action and fighting in the courts," says Jason Gonzales of Cascadia Forest Defenders.

Gonzales says he'd like to encourage the public to call and thank the Forest Service in advance for not appealing the decision and for not restarting an environmental impact statement to attempt to again log the trees.

"I'd like to say thank you to Seneca for backing off this timber sale, but Seneca has been nothing but ruthless," he says.

If the Forest Service makes a new decision that meets the requirements of the law, then there is the possibility it could move forward again with the sale. Meeting those requirements has proven difficult for the agency in the past.

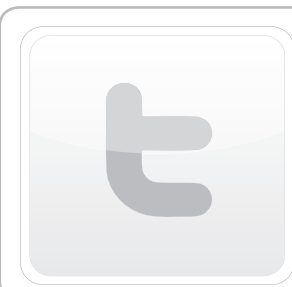
"We are taking some time over the next couple of weeks to review the court decision carefully and look at our legal, contractual and management options. We understand that there is public interest in this project and will get back to you as soon as we can with further information about how we intend to proceed," says Meg Mitchell, forest supervisor for the Willamette National Forest.

The battles over Trapper have ranged over the years from a Cascadia Forest Defender-led protest at Seneca founder Aaron Jones' home to treesits in the woods and in town. On the legal front, Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild have twice successfully challenged the species impacts opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They argued USFW had illegally issued opinions that would have allowed the Trapper timber sale to proceed despite negative effects to threatened wildlife.

Dan Kruse of Cascadia Wildlands and Susan Jane Brown of the Western Environmental Law Center filed the suit in district court that has put the brakes on Trapper. Kruse says that the Forest Service failed to address significant new information that has arisen since the agency issued a decision on the project in 2003.

When the groups filed suit in October 2010, *The Register-Guard* weighed in on the sale in an editorial, arguing the sale should go through despite the presence of a spotted owl nesting area, and that "loggers, forests and owls alike" would benefit from the science the logging would yield — Trapper is an area where logging is studied to see how it can make forest structures similar to those created by fire — but the scientists themselves wrote in a letter that logging Trapper would "not yield stand-level lessons of high value for contemporary logging practices."

Federal Judge Thomas Coffin wrote in his ruling: "Central decisions affecting the analysis and approval of the Trapper timber sale were based on a factual inaccuracy and the public has yet to be informed of the actual findings." He wrote that the public is entitled to be accurately



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