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High Density Development Proposed for St. Jo

PSU Urban Planning students presented their capstone project at the Cathedral Park Neighborhood Association meeting on Tuesday, May 12: conceptual designs for a proposed large development on the St. Johns riverfront. The 15-acre Steel Hammer property just south of the BES Water Lab is currently for sale and has garnered the interest of at least two devel-



Between Our Rivers
 By Barbara Quinn



opers of residential buildings. The students have conducted outreach through walking tours and meetings to get feedback from neigh-

bors who've expressed interest in less intense building and ample green space. The students admit however, that a developer is likely to build what pencils out best—four or five upscale apartment buildings covering most of the property, with heights of 45' to a possible 70' with bonuses. The buildings would be set back 50 feet from the river.

There are challenges facing the plan. **Zoning change**
 The zoning would have to change and the St. Johns Plan 2004 overridden, a process that seems to be taken for granted by the neighborhood association and likely encouraged by city staff who see north Portland absorbing a great deal of the expected growth in the Portland area. The assumption that the site will be developed as high density housing is odd since the relatively new St. Johns Plan was the culmination of two years of community and stakeholder feedback that prohibited residential uses on most of the site. The original overlay was a response to Union Pacific Railroad's wish that no residential building take place on the river side of the tracks bisecting the property due to safety and liability issues. It's not clear if anyone has contacted Union Pacific to discuss the proposed change of zone.

Train whistles affect property
 Train tracks cut through the site and their whistles blow from one side of the property at Burlington all the way to the other side at Richmond around 2am each night. To make the site even tolerable for prospective residents, a whistle-free zone would have to be implemented and crossing arms added to Burlington and Richmond to the tune of several million dollars each. This would presumably have to be paid for by the developer possibly with help from the Port and City.



Needs for a greenway buffer
 A riverside buffer is badly needed to aid in the restoration to a healthy Willamette River. It would help filter and clean storm water runoff and shade the water's edge for endangered salmon small fry as well as allow habitat for water dependent animals such as turtles, frogs and beavers. There is green space on either side of the property and connectivity is important.

There is contamination
 According to Matt McClincy, DEQ's Portland Harbor Source Control Coordinator, the property once housed a plywood mill that brought in grit from sandblasting ships to use as fill material. He says the grit may permeate the soil and contains serious contaminants such as Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the most harmful pollutant in the superfund, a carcinogen and endocrine disrupter that can damage the nervous system of young children; polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (Pahs), a byproduct of burning petroleum and coal that can turn to vapor readily and may be as harmful as PCBs; and there are heavy metals such as lead. A developer would be held to a lower standard of clean up

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