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# The Southwest Portland Post

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## COMMUNITY LIFE

Mayor and City Council  
candidates debate slated  
for October 16  
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Volume No. 20, Issue No. 12

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Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

October 2012

## Construction bond would bring needed improvements to Southwest schools

By Jillian Daley  
*The Southwest Portland Post*

If the school construction bond passes on November 6, it would gen-

erate \$482 million in revenue, funds that would support reconstructing and improving buildings at Portland Public Schools, including several here in Southwest.

The bond aims to bring schools into this century. More than half of the district's 78 schools were built before 1940, and several are more than 100 years old, according to school district documents.

During a presentation at the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting in September, school district spokeswoman Erin Barnett and Portland School Board member Ruth Adkins delivered a bond presentation, which included how the bond would affect the Southwest.

Southwest schools that stand to reap the benefits of the bond revenue include:

- Roof replacement and seismic bracing at Ainsworth and Hayhurst elementary schools.
- New roofs at Bridlemile, Maplewood and Stephenson elementary schools as well as Jackson Middle School and Wilson High School.
- Seismic strengthening at Ainsworth and Hayhurst and Jackson Middle School.
- Upgrades for greater access for people with disabilities at Ainsworth

and Markham elementary schools as well as West Sylvan Middle School and Lincoln and Wilson high schools,

• Science lab improvements at Robert Gray and Jackson middle schools and Hayhurst.

For the first eight years of the measure, the cost to homeowners would be \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed property value; the bond would dip to 30 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value for an additional 12 years, according to school district documents.

For a house with an assessed property value of \$150,000, the cost would be \$165 per year for the first eight years and \$45 per year for the additional 12 years.

A "citizen accountability committee" will oversee the bond program. The bond money only can be used to rebuild or improve schools, not for salaries or educational programs. There will be a dedicated funding stream to ensure that the new buildings can be maintained.

To make the decisions about what  
*(Continued on Page 6)*



Portland School District spokeswoman Erin Barnett and Portland School Board member Ruth Adkins delivered a presentation on the proposed school construction bond at the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting in September. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

## Historic home at Eagle Point, one of two viewpoints along Terwilliger Parkway, is up for sale

By Lee Perlman  
*The Southwest Portland Post*

The 1912 Olmsted Plan for Southwest Terwilliger Parkway called for two public viewpoints. One was Elk Point, now partially occupied by the Chart House restaurant. The other, Eagle Point (4099 SW Lowell Lane), was never acquired and eventually abandoned by planners – but is now for sale.

Friends of Terwilliger Parkway member Susan Egnor told the Homestead Neighborhood Association last month that she was on Terwilliger during the parkway's centennial celebration in July, and was startled to see owner Kirk Kenwood set up a card table with a sign saying, "House for Sale."

Kenwood has since held several open houses on the 1.2-acre property. However, he later told *The Post*, he would prefer to sell it to a public

agency such as the City of Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

City officials contacted by the Post refused to discuss the matter. However, Hillsdale community activist Wes Risher told Homestead that there have been discussions with officials of the park bureau about acquiring and maintaining the property, with Metro about using some of its Nature in Neighborhoods funds for the acquisition, and that both expressed interest.

The current driveway originally circled the property's perimeter, but part of it was vacated in 1963; in that year also, 0.2 acres of the property was sold off. Tree growth has obscured the original view to some extent, but it still offers a spectacular vista of downtown, the Willamette Valley, and Mount Hood.

Kenwood said the four-bedroom house was built in 1892 by Frederick Walpole. Later occupants included the naturalist John Muir (not the



Kirk Kenwood's four-bedroom house at Eagle Point was built in 1892 by Frederick Walpole. Kenwood said he would prefer to sell the house and property to the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation (Post photo by Lee Perlman)

creator of Yosemite National Park), and Kenwood's father John.

The elder Kenwood served as director of the Portland Development Commission for 20 years under Commission chair Ira Keller and Mayor Terry Shrunck. Both of Kenwood's parents were military pilots during World War II who met at a USO Show.

Kenwood said the house's features include stone fireplaces in every room and old growth fir floors, harvested from trees on the

property. The house is now surrounded by second-growth trees as high as 100 feet.

Some of them, including a Japanese maple and a sequoia, were planted to commemorate the birth of his three children, he said.

Kenwood has lived in the house all his life, and loves it, but said, "I don't need all that room, and I do need the money. I'd rather sell it to Parks and have them care for the house than sell it to a developer who'd tear it down."

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The Southwest Portland Post  
4207 SE Woodstock Blvd #509  
Portland, OR 97206

**COMMUNITY LIFE**

By Don Snedecor  
The Southwest Portland Post

**9 Multnomah Neighborhood Association** meets again on Tuesday, October 9, at 7:00 p.m. at the Multnomah Center, Room 30, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy. Find out the low-down about the upcoming Multnomah Boulevard sidewalk and bike lane project. For more information, please contact Moses Ross, chair, 503-309-7985 or email mnachair@gmail.com.

**10 Neighborhood Small Grants** are available once again. Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.'s share this year is \$10,020. The funds, distributed to the seven district coalitions by the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, are available to community organizations for special projects. SWNI will hold a workshop for potential grant applicants on Wednesday, October 10 from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Multnomah Center, 7688 SW Capitol Highway. Applications are due November 5. For more information, visit [www.swni.org/grants](http://www.swni.org/grants).

**16 SWNI Candidates Debate** will be held on Tuesday, October 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Multnomah Center

Auditorium, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy. The debate will feature candidates Jefferson Smith and Charlie Hales, who are in the runoff for Portland Mayor. Candidates Amanda Fritz (incumbent) and Mary Nolan are in the runoff for Portland City Commissioner. For more information call 503-823-4592 or visit [www.swni.org](http://www.swni.org).

**29 Spirit of Portland Awards** will be presented by members of the Portland City Council in a ceremony beginning at 7 p.m. October 29 at the Double Tree Hotel, 1000 NE Multnomah St.

**Ashcreek Neighborhood Association** (Neighborhood Of The Year) is being recognized for devising a formula acceptable to all parties for providing traffic calming on Southwest Garden Home Road; for working with the Crestwood neighborhood on improvements to Woods Park and the intersection of Southwest Taylors Ferry Road and Capitol Highway; for creating a Good Neighbor Agreement with a new sports bar; for creating a memorial fund in honor of the late Patty Lee; and other accomplishments.

Southwest resident **Bruce Murray** (Community Stewardship) is another winner. He has served as board chair of CASH Oregon, which works with AARP and others to help low income individuals secure federal tax refunds they are entitled to. He has also volunteered with Friends of Marquam

Park, and helped secure funding for the Southwest Trails Committee's 4T Trail.

**31 Sixth Annual Halloween in the Village** is Wednesday, October 31 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Last year more than 1200 little goblins raided the Village, so this year Portland Police will be directing traffic. Start at Starbucks (SW 34<sup>th</sup> and Capitol Hwy) to pick up your walking map. Finish across the street for a special treat from Dr. Jensen's Multnomah Village Dental Care. Parents are encouraged to dress up. Costume contest with prizes, \$5 photos to benefit Neighborhood House on the Harvest Stage. Visit [www.multnomahvillage.org](http://www.multnomahvillage.org) for more information.

Lee Perlman contributed to this calendar

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Remember the Golden Rule when driving along neighborhood streets**

I see that the city is going ahead to change the speed signs and reduce the speeds in many Portland neigh-

borhoods. Many neighborhoods have asked for and received traffic calming techniques already.

Some southwest streets have electronic signs that tell you what the posted speed is and how fast you are going.

Our neighborhood street happens to be a main arterial and therefore cannot have traffic calming due to the needs of emergency vehicles.

A large percentage of cars blow right through the stop sign near my home and almost all speed on this neighborhood street.

I requested one of those electronic speed signs but was told that there are no funds. Furthermore, the police told me that they couldn't enforce the speed on my street because there is no place to hide!

So, I am asking all the residents of neighborhoods who have benefit of speed calming options to stop speeding on ALL streets!

You want me to drive slowly past your house and residents of my neighborhood street would like the same courtesy. Think about it!

Patti Waitman-Ingebretsen  
Multnomah

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# Wilson High School principal shares plan to replace stadium turf

## HILLSDALE NOTEBOOK

By Jillian Daley  
The Southwest Portland Post

The new Wilson High School principal shared the plan for the school stadium with members of the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association at its Sept. 5 meeting.

Principal Brian Chatard said the plan is to replace the grass in the stadium with synthetic, all-weather turf. Having turf instead of grass would open up the field to winter sports, be low-maintenance and conserve water, Chatard said. The turf would last 20 years.

The Wilson Fields Improvement

Project, a subcommittee of the Wilson Boosters, intends to meet its \$1.2 million investment fundraising goal by May 2013, completing the project by August 2013. For more information on the fundraising effort, go to [www.wilsonfields.org](http://www.wilsonfields.org).

Chatard also told Hillsdale neighbors last month that he was impressed with the large showing of volunteers who helped beautify his school during the Community Service Day in August.

He said he supports partnering with the community and always is looking for volunteers. He added that he wouldn't mind some help keeping an eye on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders who eat at the food carts set up at the entrance to the school. Although underclassmen are not usually allowed to have lunch off campus, Chatard is permitting them to eat at the food carts while under supervision.

### Committee to prioritize sidewalk repair list

Transportation Committee chairman Glenn Bridger invited the community to weigh in at a committee meeting

on Sept. 18 about which sidewalks they'd like to see prioritized to be repaired.

Bridger said extended shoulders might be another option where a sidewalk is not financially feasible.

At this month's committee meeting, he plans to finalize the priority sidewalks list, which he will present to the neighborhood association in November or December. Once the list is approved, Bridger plans to present it to the city for consideration.

For more information, email [gbridger@teleport.com](mailto:gbridger@teleport.com).

### Funds available for Main Street improvements

Hillsdale Main Street design committee co-chairman Richard Garfinkle said there is \$20,000 in Main Street funding

available to business and property owners for storefront improvements, \$10,000 of which must be used for lighting improvements.

There also could be an additional \$30,000 grant from State Farm for storefront improvements. For more information, contact Hillsdale Main Street executive director Megan Braunsten 503-896-9211 or [meganb@hillsdale-mainstreet.org](mailto:meganb@hillsdale-mainstreet.org).



Ninth-graders in teacher Alicia Provost's physical education class played touch football in the grass at the Wilson High School stadium on September 27. Students will be able to play on the field year-round once artificial turf is installed. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

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# Library district would create single source of funding for Multnomah County

By Jillian Daley  
The Southwest Portland Post

Half a million people in the Portland metro area carry a Multnomah County Library card, said library supporter Tom Mattox during a presentation before Hillsdale Neighborhood Association on September 5.

"Now more than ever, we really need the services of the library," Mattox said. "We love the library. It's one of the safe, educational places we can use for free. It's a central part of our democracy."

A county measure on the November ballot would form a library district with a permanent rate. A library district is an independent entity with dedicated property tax revenue.

To support the library district, homeowners would pay up to \$1.24 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. It will be \$1.18 for the first five years, increasing in \$.01 increments during the next five years. The district takes effect in 2013.

If approved, Multnomah County's new district would be the 25th library district in Oregon, according to the Multnomah County Library website.

"One of the prides of the Hillsdale Neighborhood is we have one of the biggest, baddest libraries, LEED-certified" said resident Arnie Panitch after Mattox's presentation. "So if we don't vote for (the district) then

there's something cockeyed." LEED is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The library district revenue would restore and retain library services such as summer reading, books, student support, job seeking support and outreach to senior citizens. It also would prevent reductions in services, programs, activities and hours at the library's 19 locations, according to the measure filed with the county.

"The number of libraries has been expanding, which also adds to operating costs," said Ruth Adkins, a Board of Education member attending the neighborhood association meeting. "There was some concern that they built more than they could support."

Mattox said Adkins' comment reminded him of something. "One thing I read, if you took all the square space of the libraries – downtown and all of the branches – they would all fit inside the Seattle Public Library," he said.

Currently, 24 percent of Multnomah County Library funding comes from the county general fund and 66 percent comes from a library levy. The remaining 10 percent comes from sources such as fees, fines and grants, according to the library website.

The library's local option levy was renewed in May. Through the levy, homeowners pay \$0.89 per 1,000 dollars assessed value.

Hillsdale Neighborhood Associa-



Multnomah County Library supporter Tom Mattox delivered a presentation on the proposed library district during the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting in September. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

tion chairman Mikal Apenes said he was curious as to how the library district would affect the current funding structure. "What happens to the funding that comes from the county?"

Mattox replied if the library district were approved, the library no longer would receive supplemental funding from the county. "That will actually free up a little money in the county to spend on other things," Mattox said.

If voters approve the library district, it would supersede years Two and Three of the freshly renewed three-year levy, according to the li-

brary's website. The district would become the single source of funding for the library.

Mattox said voters should support the library because so many people depend on it. "We are the second busiest library system in the country," he said. "Does anybody know who the first is?"

"New York," called out a couple of people at the meeting. "That's right," Mattox said.

For more information, go to [www.multcolib.org/about/funding/funding-faq.html](http://www.multcolib.org/about/funding/funding-faq.html).

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# Portland City Council considers new street paving strategies

## OUT OF THE MUD

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

The Portland City Council considered new street paving strategies in a work session August 28, and quickly found that not only does one size not fit all, one strategy does not suit the whole city.

The project, originally called Street by Street and later renamed Out of the Mud by Mayor Sam Adams, is looking at more flexible ways to provide some degree of paving for the city's 60 miles of unpaved streets, and especially the 45 miles of small residential streets.

These streets tend to be concentrated in East Portland and the Southwest Hills with smaller concentrations in northeast's Cully and southeast's Brentwood-Darlington and Woodstock neighborhoods, Christine Leon of the Portland Bureau of Transportation told Council.

"We have done tests with streets paved with gravel, and they needed maintenance work a year later," Leon said. "There are complaints about dust from unpaved streets. They don't meet access standards for use by the disabled."

However, Leon said, currently the

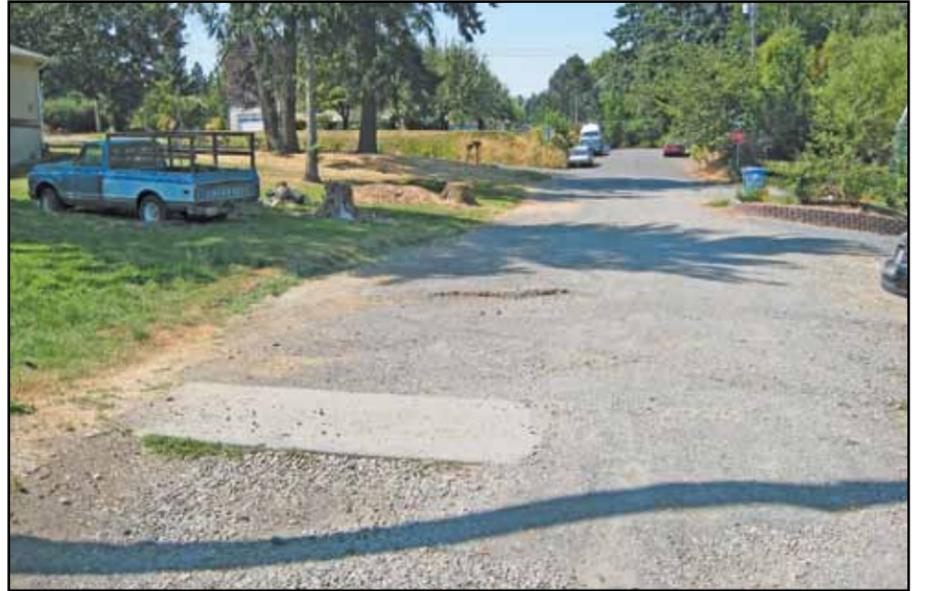
City assumes maintenance only for "standard" streets. These are 26 to 28 feet wide and include two travel lanes, two parking lanes seven to eight feet wide, a curb, a planting strip, and a sidewalk at least six feet wide.

These cost an average of \$1,300 to \$1,500 per lineal foot, with a cost to the average property owner of \$70,000 and, under financing currently available, a bill of \$300 per month; the total cost to pave all unimproved streets in this way would be \$1.5 billion, Leon said.

The Bureau of Transportation has been working since 2007 with neighbors and developers "frustrated by the lack of options," Leon said. "There is consensus that doing something is better than doing nothing."

The "something" under consideration includes more flexible standards for streets. For local streets that handle less than 500 vehicle trips per day, this could include streets with pavements only 16 feet wide, no curbs, and gravel shoulders. "People don't park on the street 24/7, and there are other things we can do with the space," Leon said.

One is to plant trees in lieu of parking spaces, narrowing the roadway and causing motorists to drive slower. The cost to property owners could be lowered to as little as \$7,500 apiece, with monthly payments of as



This is an example of one of the many unpaved streets in Southwest Portland. This is located close to 48th Avenue near Woods Park. (Post file photo by Leslie Baird)

little as \$60, Leon said.

Another issue is the way the City deals with developers. They are usually called upon to create standard streets along their frontage. "This results in an orphaned developed street segment that will be orphaned for a very long time," said Leon.

Alternatively, developers can pay a fee toward future street paving. The funds can be used to pave this street, or one where paving is considered a higher priority. The average cost is \$47,000 for a 50-foot frontage,

Leon said. "What we've heard is that given the options, they'd rather build it."

Adams said the City should create incentives to get developers to pay. Commissioner Dan Saltzman disagreed, saying, "Paving would incent other neighbors to follow their example."

Commissioner Nick Fish countered, "If the paving happened piecemeal, it could be very disruptive, and create an enormous amount of

(Continued on Page 6)

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## Water work in Hillsdale neighborhood

The **Portland Water Bureau** has begun construction near the Burlingame Water Tank site on SW 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, near SW Chestnut Street. Construction will take about 10 months to complete. The work is being done by both a contractor and Water Bureau field crews. Typical work hours will be 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Scheduled to start the week of **October 1, 2012**, crews will install 900 feet of 24-inch diameter mains, which will take about one month to complete. This work will start at SW Chestnut Street and move down SW 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the tanks. Later in the project, more pipe work on SW Chestnut Street will take place, ending near the intersection with SW Burlingame Avenue.

The project will accomplish several important water system goals, including install seismic piping, install altitude valves, and increase the supply mains diameter to meet demand.

Flagger and traffic cones will direct motorists past the work zone. At times, a street may be closed for Local Access Only, and street parking restricted. Delays should be expected. Motorists are encouraged to find alternate routes.

For project updates visit:  
[portlandoregon.gov/water/swcarolina](http://portlandoregon.gov/water/swcarolina)



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## School Construction Bond

(Continued from Page 1)

to fix and where, a citizen-led, long-range facilities plan advisory committee recommended the school board prioritize criteria.

Those criteria included year of construction, accessibility, seismic ratings and a "Facilities Condition Index," which entails using a benchmark to determine the relative condition of facilities, Barnett said.

The board, with public input, chose to focus first on rebuilding high schools and to prioritize rebuilding schools with capital partners.

Franklin, Grant and Roosevelt high schools will be rebuilt, and the planning work for reconstructing the remaining six high schools will be included in the bond. Faubion PreK-8 School also will be replaced through a capital partnership with Concordia University, a Christian university.

"I'm a big proponent of public schools and the separation of church and state," said Hillsdale resident Arnie Panitch, during the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting on September 5. "I'm very nervous about this partnership at Faubion."

"My question to you is: Will there be any change in ownership? ... I've seen other situations where the census falls off and (a public school turns) right into a parochial school," said Panitch.

Barnett said Portland Public Schools is partnering with Concordia, not relinquishing control of the school. Faubion gets a new building and Concordia, which is next to the school, will have an opportunity to provide its students with real world

experience as student teachers.

"The school board is not in any way throwing land to them (Concordia)," Adkins said.

Some of the vacant schools will be used as temporary space for students while other schools are rebuilt, Adkins said.

Adkins and Barnett also visited the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association in May. Since voters rejected a \$548 million bond to upgrade Portland school buildings in May 2011, school district officials have been reaching out to the community to find out why the bond failed and what the community wants.

Adkins said public approval of the school district's major facilities overhaul isn't a given.

"This is our dream, our hope, and it's something that we have to earn."

Voters did approve a local option levy that also was on the May 2011 ballot, which pays for teachers and operational support, but the construction bond's failure halted the school district's plans to improve and rebuild schools.

The school district will involve the school community in the design of schools that are slated to be rebuilt, Barnett added in an email on September 19. Community access would be a priority with schools potentially sharing meeting space, gyms and stages with the public.

At the Hillsdale meeting, Adkins said she would love to see housing become a part of future school plans. If this bond is successful, she added, others might be put before the public in the future.

For more information, visit [www.pps.net/about-us/Bond.htm](http://www.pps.net/about-us/Bond.htm).

## Street Paving Strategies

(Continued from Page 5)

hardship."

Justin Wood of Fish Construction tended to agree with Adams. "For us, we'd much rather develop the block as a whole, and pay our share of it," Wood said.

"To build streets parcel by parcel costs ten times as much, and it's hard to sell a house with mud in front of it."

On the other hand, Wood said, "It's not always easy to get the neighbors to agree. It's better to develop to a lower standard."

This brought up another issue: how the streets are paid for. Normally, owners representing a majority of the street frontage ownership must agree to a street's development through a Local Improvement District.

However, in the past, people were allowed by the City to build on unimproved streets by signing a waiver stating that when someone proposed to build a street, at any time in the future, they would "waive" their right to oppose it.

Second, third and fourth generations of property owners have found these waivers of remonstrance buried, to their dismay, in their deeds. Leon said there were 12,000 such outstanding waivers in the City.

Leon said that the lowest cost paving options, done citywide, would run \$91 to \$96 million. PBOT has looked at a variety of options to pay for this.

One, PBOT's Jennifer Cooperman said, was to spread the cost of street improvements over a wider area. This brought a groan from southwest residents, who tried this approach two years ago with the so-called

Halo LID with disastrous results.

Asked to testify by Adams, Southwest Neighborhoods Inc. board president Marianne Fitzgerald told the City Council, "There were arterials where we really wanted sidewalks.

We tried to create LIDs covering a quarter-mile to bring the cost down."

"Within a block people were okay with it, but the further away they were, the less accepting people were. It was still expensive; the storm water costs were killing us," said Fitzgerald.

Indeed, Leon said, storm water introduces a new element to paving in southwest. It is best to treat runoff on site, she said, but because southwest clay absorbs water so poorly, it is necessary to convey it off-site.

Cooperman said PBOT has looked at several formulas to help pay for paving. One, a new gas tax, is deficient for the same reason the statewide tax is: as more people do less driving in more fuel-efficient vehicles, the amount of revenue steadily decreases.

A sales tax, in addition to encountering Oregon's traditional hostility to this approach, would not generate enough money, Cooperman said. Other options are some sort of user fee and general obligation bond.

Council praised PBOT's efforts to look at new paving options. Commissioner Amanda Fritz said, "I'm really pleased to see this coming forward, and the new design options. We need to look at who pays, who benefits, and is it fair."

Fish said he appreciated that Leon had presented "a menu" of options rather than advocating for one approach. "I find this range of options incredibly helpful," he said.

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# City of Portland approves naturopathic college's 10-year master plan

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

In the face of zero public opposition or concern, Hearings Officer Gregory Frank last month approved the National College of Natural Medicine's 10-year master plan for its campus.

The plan covers a 5.4-acre area bounded by Southwest Naito Parkway, Woods Street, and Corbett and Kelly avenues. Within this area the college currently owns 80 percent of the land. It also includes some single family homes owned by others.

Several of these property owners attended the hearing. In testimony obviously aimed at these owners rather than Frank, NCNM consultant Beverly Bookin said that the designation merely "an alert to the City and owners of the College's ultimate intent."

To do otherwise, Bookin said, would require the college to go through a costly plan amendment process in order to acquire any such property.

However, Bookin added, "We want to assure you that this is based on acquisition over time between a willing buyer and seller. We don't have power of eminent domain, and we wouldn't use it even if we did."

In the meantime, she said, owners could continue to use the property for any use allowed by the zoning. "There are advantages to being in the boundary," Bookin said.

"You can expect your property to increase in value. Also, if you ever want to sell your home you know that you have a potential willing partner."

The master plan calls for new development in four phases, based on the school's most pressing needs.

Phase I calls for using a recently acquired house for "academic support," a second site for a new classroom building with underground parking, and a third for a mixture of uses that will include student housing.

Phase II calls for using four more houses for offices, another classroom building, the vacation of Southwest Meade and Hooker streets in the campus, and a new surface parking lot.

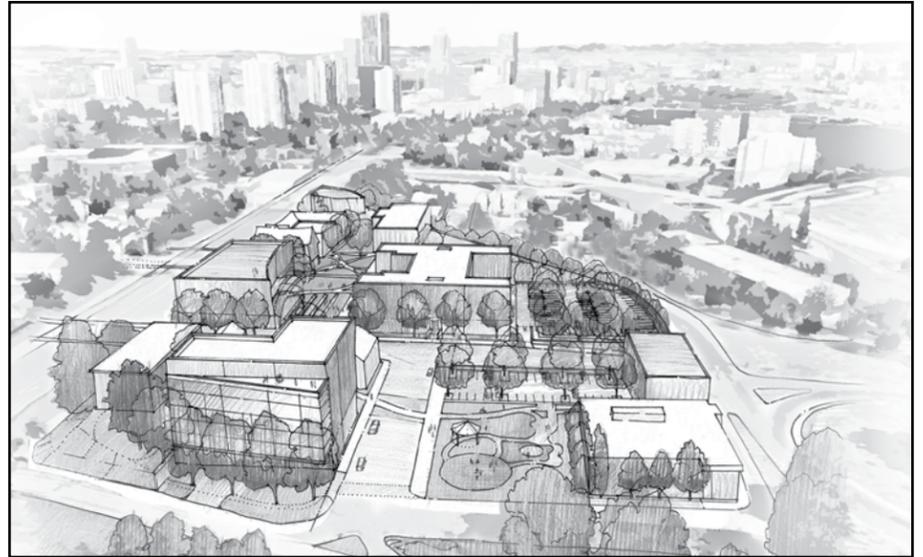
Phase III would include the expansion of an existing outpatient clinic, and creation of a two-story parking structure.

In Phase IV, the college would redo its main building. Originally built as Failing School in 1913, the building was later used by Portland Community College until being acquired by NCNM in 1995.

Although NCNM has worked extensively with the South Portland Neighborhood Association in creating its plan, that group gave no official input on the final document; neither did anyone else prior to the hearing.

At the hearing itself there was no public testimony offered. Frank asked Bookin if the college was satisfied with the conditions of approval recommended by planner Sylvia Cate.

"We're comfortable with the conditions; they're all fair and reasonable," she replied. Frank then took the unusual step of announcing that he would approve the plan with Cate's conditions, unchanged.



An aerial view facing north of the proposed National College of Naturopathic Medicine's campus. Downtown Portland is in the background. (Illustration courtesy of Jenny Bowdlin, NCNM)

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**Dear EarthTalk:** I read that a single child born in the U.S. has a greater effect on the environment than a dozen children born in a developing country? Can you explain why?  
— Josh C., via e-mail

It is well known that Americans consume far more natural resources and live much less sustainably than people from any other large country of the world.

“A child born in the United States will create thirteen times as much ecological damage over the course of his or her lifetime than a child born in Brazil,” reports the Sierra Club’s Dave Tilford, adding that the average American will drain as many resources as 35 natives of India and consume 53 times more goods and services than someone from China.

Tilford cites a litany of sobering statistics showing just how profligate Americans have been in using and abusing natural resources. For example, between 1900 and 1989 U.S. population tripled while its use of raw materials grew by a factor of 17.

“With less than 5 percent of world population, the U.S. uses one-third of the world’s paper, a quarter of the world’s oil, 23 percent of the coal, 27 percent of the aluminum, and 19 percent of the copper,” Tilford reports.

“Our per capita use of energy, metals, minerals, forest products, fish, grains, meat, and even fresh water dwarfs that of people living in the developing world.”

Tilford adds that the U.S. ranks highest in most consumer categories by a considerable margin, even among industrial nations.

To wit, American fossil fuel consumption is double that of the average resident of Great Britain and two and a half times that of



With less than 5 percent of world population, the United States of America uses a third of the world’s paper, a quarter of the oil, coal and aluminum, and 19 percent of the copper. The USA ranks highest by a considerable margin in most consumer categories as well. (Photo courtesy of Comstock/Thinkstock)

the average Japanese. Meanwhile, Americans account for only five percent of the world’s population but create half of the globe’s solid waste.

Americans’ love of the private automobile constitutes a large part of their poor ranking. The National Geographic Society’s annual Greendex analysis of global consumption habits finds that Americans are least likely of all people to use public transportation—only seven percent make use of transit options for daily commuting.

Likewise, only one in three Americans walks or bikes to their destinations, as opposed to three-quarters of Chinese. While China is becoming the world’s leader in total consumption of some commodities (coal, copper, etc.), the U.S. remains the per capita consumption leader for most resources.

Overall, National Geographic’s Greendex found that American consumers rank last of 17 countries surveyed in regard to sustainable behavior.

Furthermore, the study found that U.S. consumers are among the least likely to feel guilty about the impact they have on the environment, yet they are near to top of the list in believing that individual choices could make a difference.

Paradoxically, those with the

lightest environmental footprint are also the most likely to feel both guilty and disempowered.

“In what may be a major disconnect between perception and behavior, the study also shows that consumers who feel the guiltiest about their impact—those in China, India and Brazil—actually lead the pack in sustainable consumer choices,” says National Geographic’s Terry Garcia, who coordinates the annual Greendex study.

“That’s despite Chinese and In-

dian consumers also being among the least confident that individual action can help the environment.”

Readers can discover how they stack up by taking a survey on National Geographic’s Greendex website. But brace yourself if you are a typical American: You might not like what you find out about yourself.

Contacts: Sierra Club’s “Sustainable Consumption,” [www.sierra-club.org/sustainable-consumption](http://www.sierra-club.org/sustainable-consumption); National Geographic Society’s Greendex, [www.nationalgeographic.com/greendex](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/greendex).

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