



Image: Welcome to the University of Oregon

## ***"Final Report of the Riverfront Research Park Review Committee to President Dave Frohnmayer"***

**October 15, 1998**

### **Executive Summary**

President Dave Frohnmayer appointed this committee on March 18, 1998 and asked us to report within approximately six months. We have held more than a dozen meetings, mostly long and all open to the public, solicited comments widely via E-mail and ordinary mail and held one well-advertised evening meeting to take verbal testimony from the public. We have examined numerous documents related to RRP, invited those with specialized knowledge to share it with the committee and benefited from the continual cooperation and deep fund of knowledge of Diane Wiley, the RRP's sole staff person. At the President's suggestion, we also hired a consultant (Frank Giunta of Connaissance International, San Francisco) to research and advise us on matters primarily related to the business aspects of RRP. His report, appended to this one, contains a large amount of well-organized information.

A majority of the committee was personally little acquainted with the RRP before we were appointed. We found that most of the University community was also poorly informed of the current status of the park and its history. Misinformation was as widespread as accurate knowledge. Hence the body of this report gives a succinct statement of some of the facts the committee has ascertained to its satisfaction. It took no careful investigation to find that there is widespread opposition to RRP based primarily on deep attachment to the open area on the south bank of the Willamette within RRP boundaries. Upon completion of its study, the committee has found that RRP is doing a better job of fulfilling its original purpose than seems to be generally known.

We were asked for advice on RRP, which we summarize as follows:

- 1. Viability:** The Riverfront Research park is a worthwhile, although peripheral, project of the University of Oregon and should be continued according to previous comprehensive plans and practices with some adjustments as noted hereafter.
- 2. Open Space:** Community desire for maintaining a substantial open space along the south bank of the Willamette is strong and pervasive. Much of the testimony we heard focuses concern on the area around the soccer field near Autzen footbridge in the River View Sector.

A. Delayed build-out. Currently, there are no plans for immediate development in the River View Sector. It is the last sector scheduled for build-out, behind Silva (substantially completed), Gateway (the EWEB pole yard, next), and the Millrace Sectors. We recommend that no building be sited in the River View Sector until another review is completed.

B. Clustered development. We recommend that the University consider increasing the density in the Gateway Sector. To compensate, the University should leave as open space a large area of the River View Sector. We also

recommend that the University provide renewed focus to creative design principles and environmentally-sensitive development.

C. Increased setback along river bank. We believe the 35-foot setback from the top of the slope above the river to the front of RRP buildings is inadequate in most cases. A setback closer to 100 feet would be desirable. We recognize that this may not be attainable in the Gateway Sector.

We recommend that the President ask appropriate committees, groups and executives to consider these proposals for strengthening the protection of the river edge already written into the Master Plan.

**3. Governance:** The present governance structure does not need to be revised.

**4. Community Relations:** The RRP needs a substantial community relations plan.

**5. Outreach:** Ways must be found to strengthen student, faculty and community involvement. Developed portions of the site and their landscaping need to be welcoming to the public.

**6. Staffing and a Business Plan:** It is clear to the committee that RRP is understaffed. We know this is also true of many other University of Oregon programs, but we recommend that President Frohnmayer, the Mayor, the City Council and the RRP Commission weigh the costs and benefits of some increased staffing. An up-to-date business plan is also needed.

**7. Building Costs:** To attract future tenants with market rate costs for space, ways must be found to construct buildings more economically which still meet the stylistic, esthetic and environmental standards of RRP.

**8. Developer:** The University of Oregon Foundation seems willing to undertake the role of developer with appropriate safeguards. This would have many benefits. If it does not happen, RRP needs to engage an entrepreneurial developer who has the financial ability to take some risk in building before full occupancy is achieved and who can negotiate with prospective tenants more freely.

**9. Review:** We suggest a five-year cycle for major reviews of RRP.

**10. Physical Plant:** Relocation of the University Facilities Services (Physical Plant) remains a key problem.

**11. Miscellaneous:** We have a number of suggestions for consideration by various RRP executives or committees. We think some affiliation with local hospitals might be beneficial. Student, employee, faculty and/or retired faculty housing in mixed use buildings seemed attractive to many. The restaurant near the river edge currently shown as part of the RRP master plan is attractive to some but not all. Privately developed convention facilities along Franklin Boulevard informally linked with RRP also seems worth consideration, as would other links with the local community.

A more formal and extensive report follows this Executive Summary, expanding on the above points.

**Final Report of the  
Riverfront Research Park (RRP) Review Committee  
to President Dave Frohnmayer: Extended Remarks**

On March 18, 1998 President Dave Frohnmayer of the University of Oregon appointed the following people to a steering committee for a review process to advise him on matters relating to the Riverfront Research Park (RRP):

-Paul C. Engelking, Professor of Chemistry, Faculty Advisory Council, petition signer;

- Debra Guatelli-Steinberg, Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology;
- Tom Hoyt, University of Oregon Foundation;
- Joanne R. Hugi, Director of University Computing, Chair of Riverfront Design Advisory Committee;
- Michele Johnson, Undergraduate, President ASUO Senate; represented by her successor, Michael Olson since June;
- Theodore W. Palmer, Chair, Professor of Mathematics, Chair of the Campus Planning Committee;
- Margaret L. Paris, Associate Professor of Law, Faculty Advisory Council;
- Marian Smith, Associate Professor Music, University Senate.

He asked the committee to "complement and bring current the years of study, consultation, and community discussion that have been involved in the development to date." The committee was very ably staffed by David Hubin, Assistant President, Diane Wil ey, long-time RRP Director and Kathy Wagner, Executive Assistant.

Most of the committee came to the task not only with open minds, but also with hardly any knowledge of RRP beyond the fact that some vocal critics worried about its impact on the riverfront near the south end of the Autzen footbridge. We were ignorant of its history and its present status. Exceptions to this general ignorance were Joanne Hugi, long-time chair of the RRP Design Advisory Committee, Tom Hoyt, who as a local businessman and friend of the University had been involved in a peripheral way for years, and Paul Engelking who, along with over one hundred other faculty members, signed a petition asking that RRP's extension to the north side of the tracks be reconsidered.

We held more than a dozen long meetings (including a series in May starting at 7:30 am), all open to the public and with some non-committee members present at each one. We were given and read voluminous documents, toured the site itself, invited, questioned and listened to many people with special knowledge. We also widely advertised our E-mail and ordinary mail address which netted about 300 responses. We held a widely publicized open meeting at 7:30 pm May 28 in the EMU.

At President Frohnmayer's suggestion, we hired a consultant to help us understand business aspects of RRP and how its prospects relate to the experience of other research parks. On May 14 we approved a final draft of a request for qualifications for such a consultant. We asked for responses by June 15. Despite the short time period, we received responses from seven firms of which we judged five to be fully qualified. We finally chose Frank Giunta of Connaisance International based in San Francisco. He was invited to visit on June 22 and after this first meeting we signed a contract with him prepared on short notice by Dave Hubin. The committee has been pleased and impressed by his work. He was quick to understand our needs and the context of the RRP situation here. He has worked, read, interviewed, organized and written his final report quickly and well. His report is appended to ours and should be a valuable source of information on RRP for the President, other administrators and the wider community for several years to come.

The years of controversy surrounding RRP have tended to make it hard for both sides to communicate openly, candidly and in good faith. Misinformation about RRP is wide spread and distrust is rampant. Hence we urge that our report, including Frank Giunta's findings, be widely available, including posting as Internet (World Wide Web) accessible material linked to the University of Oregon Homepage and in the file of RRP related material this committee has put on reserve in the Library. This recommendation also extends to the RRP Master Plan and Design Guidelines, and any voluntary restrictions which are added in the future.

## **Public Input and Opposition**

The committee went to great efforts to solicit public input. This input was overwhelmingly opposed to the extension of RRP---very roughly 50 to~1. linebreak Most of this response came from the University Community: faculty, students, employees, former students, and close relatives of the those in the above categories. Some wanted to see RRP terminated but the vast majority were opposed only to its extension north of the tracks. Discussions and informal polling suggest that roughly equal parts o f the faculty are (1) opposed to RRP, (2) unconcerned with, or even unaware of RRP, and (3) in favor of RRP. Critics often have stronger opinions than proponents.

There are three grounds for opposition. A small minority are philosophically opposed on the grounds that commercialization will sully and distort academic research. This opposition is centered in our Department of Biology probably because they can cite sister biology departments in which collegial communication has broken down under the pressure of some members individual drive for wealth. This feeling is so strong and pervasive that the Department of Biology, which might otherwise provide some of the best opportunities for academic-business links, cannot be expected to play a leading role, at least any time soon.

Another minority (overlapping with other groups) fears that RRP is diverting significant resources from the rest of the University enterprise. Perhaps the majority of these people see no significant value to RRP and oppose any level of funding. Some might change their minds if they were better acquainted with the actual accomplishments of RRP. Financial support for RRP from the University is of three kinds: (1) assignment of a valuable real estate holding to the enterprise; (2) direct financial support; and (3) time, attention and effort of administrators. None of the land is being permanently disposed of. We do not know the extent of direct financial assistance nor the effect of the time, attention and effort which the central administration devotes to RRP.

However, this committee believes the resources devoted to RRP cannot be reduced without jeopardizing its continued existence, and that consideration of some increase may be justified.

By far the majority of opposition comes from the desire to preserve the open space near the river in its present condition. Up to a point, this committee shares this desire. Among this group there is division over the final status of this land. Some want it to be left in as natural a state as possible. Others see it as potential space for playing fields, picnic benches and other park-like amenities making it more accessible to the public.

Most of the area is former gravel pits refilled with urban debris and more recently covered over and replanted to grass. If it is left to develop with little further human intervention, it will provide an interesting example of a relatively large tract of highly disturbed land undergoing succession back to nature. Within half a mile, East Alton Baker Park, a former dump, is being managed that way. Most of the slope down to the river directly in front of RRP will be left untouched under any scenario .

Before RRP was planned, some of the land was expected to be devoted to playing fields, so some would like to see this use. The master plan requires 50% of the site to be preserved as open space. It calls for improvements of the bluff above the river (but not the slope down to the river) ranging from paved bike paths to picnic tables and benches. These improvements would provide better access to the riverfront ambience for those with limited mobility, parents with small children, elderly and less hardy citizens.

Those who wish to see more protection of the river front may well represent a majority of those who have seriously thought about the future of this land. They will continue to present a significant block of opposition to RRP until its plans for development guarantee an attractive south river bank. Fortunately, the present Master Plan can accommodate this with only moderate changes.

## **Some History**

The following remarks apply primarily to the land between the railroad tracks and the Willamette River, usually designated as the land north of the tracks. Most of this land was previously the site of gravel extraction.



The resulting pits were filled with urban debris, particularly from creation of the Downtown Mall. The area was primarily zoned heavy industrial when acquired by OSSHE (now called Oregon University System, OUS) on behalf of the University. Some of the land was originally acquired for parking, some for dormitories and some for other purposes. It has now been re-zoned for academic research.

Its present attractive appearance has resulted from improvements made since the University acquired the land and partly since the inception of RRP. The University has undertaken several investigations of possible toxic contamination both north of the tracks and on the site of the University Physical Plant. Early concerns about this problem have not been borne out by most of these investigations and remediation has been undertaken where needed. Urban Renewal funds have paid for the bicycle paths and walk ways on both sides of the railroad tracks, the roads, underpass and other infrastructure. The bicycle roundabout reduced the grade to meet ADA standards for accessibility to Autzen footbridge.

In 1978 a plan was developed and endorsed to use much of the land north of the track for playing fields. However, in 1984, during a period of sustained poor economic conditions, President Paul Olum saw the land as an opportunity to spur local economic development by attracting clean, knowledge-based industry. He also saw a research park as a way to improve relations with the city and county governments and the business community. In 1988, just such an alliance led to designation of the RRP project as the recipient of significant funding from the state Regional Strategies Program and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Planning for RRP was an extensive project with public input at each stage. Despite repeated challenges by citizen opponents, all decisions were upheld by local planning authorities, by the Land Use Board of Appeals and by the courts. The Master Plan reflects public input in many ways including preservation of the soccer field adjacent to Autzen footbridge, protection of the river edge, leaving 50% of the area as open space and establishing height, setback and solar access restrictions. The floor area ratio ("far", ratio of gross floor area within buildings to land area) is set at 0.7, comparable to Memorial Quadrangle and the quadrangle south of Johnson Hall on campus. For more information we refer to the document entitled "Riverfront Research Park: Public Process" appended to this report.

Over the past decade there have been two assessments of city wide public opinion on the use of the land assigned to RRP. First, a charter amendment to create a recreation/natural resources zoning district in the RRP area was on the general election ballot in November 1988. The measure, which would have prevented development north of the tracks, was defeated by a two-to-one margin with over 47,000 people voting. Second, in March 1998, a survey was taken to learn the attitudes of Eugene voters regarding urban renewal. A statistically accurate sample of the likely voting population in the next general election was prepared and 200 interviews were completed giving the survey an error margin of approximately 7%. When those in this sample were asked whether they would support or oppose keeping Eugene's RRP urban renewal district, 58% supported the district, 5% leaned toward supporting it, 18% opposed it, 2% leaned toward opposing it and 17% didn't know. Support for the downtown urban renewal district was lower than that for the RRP district. We do not know whether a vote like that in 1988 would have the same result today, nor do we know whether this year's survey would have had the same result if it specifically mentioned the river front.

Public challenges to the zoning and other land use processes delayed development about three years. The final challenge was overruled in October 1989. This delay and the bankruptcy of the original developer slowed the pace of development well below that projected in initial feasibility studies. Another developer was chosen in August 1990. The slower rate of development which proponents attribute to these causes is often cited by critics as proving that the whole concept is infeasible.

## **Present Status**

The first 60,000 square foot building at 1600 Millrace Drive was opened in March 1993 with Dynamix, Inc. as anchor tenant. The University of Oregon has been another tenant from the beginning with the Research Service Center, Computational Intelligence Research Laboratory, System Technology Development Corporation, New

Media Center and the Software Engineering Research Center as current tenants. Other tenants occupy minor amounts of space.

A year later, an existing 4000 square foot building at 1811 Garden Avenue which belongs to the University was reassigned as the Riverfront Innovation Center (It was originally built for research on wolves and was most recently assigned to the University Herbarium.). Two companies, Electrical Geodesics, Inc. and Marker Gene Technologies were initial tenants. These companies were started by faculty at the University of Oregon and have grown from concept to viability in this space. A number of other commercial ideas have originated on this campus in recent years.

A grant request to replace this oddly configured building with a larger and more adaptable structure is now being pursued. Innovation centers, operated to help new companies develop, are an increasing focus of university-related research parks.

The building at 1800 Millrace Drive is a 47,000 square foot general purpose building completed this year with Percon, Inc. as anchor tenant. Its construction is less expensive than that involved in 1600 Millrace Drive. The two firms that began in the incubation center and now need additional space will also become tenants of this building.

One building site remains in the Silva Sector. This site seems likely to be developed soon. The next area for building is expected to be the former EWEB pole yard known as the Gateway Sector.

This site can support at least three buildings, so it seems that pressure to build in the Riverview Sector near the Autzen footbridge is at least 5 years away. Some remediation is likely to be required in the Gateway Sector, which may add expense and delay to building there.

At present all RRP buildings are fully occupied with appropriate tenants. It is reasonable to hope, but not guaranteed, that as future buildings are constructed the collection of nearby research-oriented companies will make the area increasingly interesting to such companies. Relatively low land values in the Eugene area may make it increasingly attractive to companies from elsewhere, particularly northern California.

## Specific Advice to the President

In this section we gather explanations, comments and information supporting the ten numbered points of advice in the Executive summary.

**1. Viability:** When we began our investigation of RRP, the most fundamental question we faced was whether it should be continued or terminated. We have found that RRP has developed slowly, but is beginning to fulfill some of the promise seen by its supporters in small ways. It is certainly not the dismal failure that many people believe it to be.

Creation of RRP is sometimes supported primarily in terms of expected future rental income to the University. Frank Giunta's report makes clear that this will never be a large source of income.

Financial benefits should not be considered as the major reason for creating or expanding RRP. Eventually, RRP is likely to generate a stream of income more than sufficient to cover its costs.

Nevertheless the committee sees a number of potential benefits some of which are already being realized at least in small ways.

A. Outreach: RRP creates and improves relationships with the City of Eugene, the business community and the State of Oregon generally. Conversely, any failure to carry through on this project would damage the University's credibility with these groups and the State Legislature. As more non-polluting research-intensive

industry is attracted to the site and more jobs are created, there will be increased favorable relations with the community.

**B. Employment:** RRP companies should be encouraged to establish, and should benefit from establishing, internships and other work opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. Not only students, but faculty spouses create a large pool of educated, creative and highly motivated relatively young and up-to-date potential employees. Such jobs for students will not only satisfy the needs of many for income, but will contribute to their education and employment opportunities after graduation either with companies related to RRP or in emerging fields. It can provide motivation for their studies by giving them practical experience. Summer employment for some faculty is another potential advantage.

All these employment opportunities can benefit not only students with technical training but also students in business, law, economics, advertising and those able to write well and analyze problems. For instance, a number of art majors have found employment and sometimes permanent jobs in multi-media and software design through RRP. This would hardly have been predicted in advance.

**C. Opportunities for Entrepreneurial Faculty:** Some University professors have already seen ways in which their academic research can be developed commercially and have used RRP as a way to take their ideas from the planning stage to the level of successful companies. One can expect this to continue and to create locally the type of business which are closely connected to University research and are sometimes recruited from outside the area at major expense.

**D. Recruiting:** Some potential faculty and some potential students will see RRP as a significant factor in deciding to come to the University of Oregon.

**E. Educational benefits:** Some students, who came to the University primarily because their parents or others have told them they should, have only a vague sense of why learning to write well and easily or to master mathematics and other subjects is important. As a liberal arts university, we believe that enrichment of students' life experience is a major reason for education. However, some students may gain a much better understanding of the need to master subjects by employment or even student projects related to real world experience. An opportunity to work at an RRP company will be more valuable than work in a fast food outlet. The knowledge-based companies which RRP has already and should continue to attract will significantly contribute practical education as well as motivation to many of our students.

**2. Open Space:** The high level of continuing opposition to RRP comes from several sources, but primarily from those afraid that future development will destroy the lovely stretch of river front within its area. We are convinced that development of RRP along the lines of its existing Master Plan (dated December 1988) is possible without destroying the river front, because the Master Plan has enhancement and preservation of the river front area as a major goal. We are also convinced that preservation of additional open space (particularly near the Autzen footbridge) and more protection of the river front throughout RRP, is essential. Moreover, we have concluded (based on Frank Giunta's report on pages 92-93) that a modest reduction in square footage of RRP build-out would not affect RRP's viability. We therefore recommend voluntary strengthening of the Master Plan's open space protections, along the following lines:

**A. Delayed build-out.** The desire to preserve open space south of the river is centered on the area near the footbridge where the soccer field is already slated for preservation. (This field is scheduled for enhancement by converting it to two parallel fields oriented at right angles to the present field, and extending a little farther west. In fact, the field is already played this way during practice.) The committee shares the community's desire to preserve this area (the River View Sector) as open space as long as possible. Currently, there are no plans for immediate development in the River View Sector. It is the last sector scheduled for build-out, behind Silva (substantially completed), Gateway (the EWEB pole yard, next), and the Millrace Sectors. UO Senate legislation and the conditions imposed by OSSHE (now OUS) require a review (such as our own) of development as each sector is completed and before initiating the next.



We recommend that no building be sited in the River View Sector now. After the other sectors reach completion, the committee convened to evaluate RRP should make an informed recommendation about the disposition of the River View Sector.

B. Clustered development. We recommend that the University consider increasing the density in the Gateway Sector in order to allow preservation as open space a larger area of the River View Sector. In a laudable attempt at compromise, those opposed to development in the River View Sector had Mike Pease draw a conceptual plan representing their ideas. It is available as part of the record of this committee.

It appears that the Master Plan can be interpreted as applying its 50 % open-space requirement to the whole RRP area, rather than individual parcels within it. This interpretation would allow future development to be denser in the Gateway Sector and to leave additional compensating open space in the River View Sector.

We recommend that the University employ creative design principles, along the lines noted in Frank Giunta's report on pages 98-99, when implementing this clustered development concept. The University should also provide renewed focus to environmentally-sensitive development. The University is already known for its substantial expertise in the design of environmentally-friendly buildings. RRP needs to focus this expertise on its own buildings. Cutting-edge environmental design will save money in the long run.

C. Increased setback along river bank. A graphic on page 44 of the Master Plan shows the current setback requirement. A maximum 45-foot, 3-story façade must be set back a minimum of 35 feet from the top of the slope above the river. (For comparison, the EWEB office building, which was built when the Master Plan was developed, is taller and set back only about 30 feet.) We conclude that the 35-foot setback from the top of the slope above the river to the front of RRP buildings will be inadequate in most cases. A 35-foot setback should be considered an absolute minimum, and a setback closer to 100 feet would be desirable. (We recognize that this may not be attainable in the Gateway Sector.)

We recommend that the President ask appropriate committees, groups and executives to consider these three sets of recommendations. We hope such consideration will result in permanently protected open spaces along the river front and in the River View Sector.

The University's business is education, not park management. Thus,, the President may wish to investigate the idea of eventually trading some land immediately adjacent to the river to the City of Eugene's Department of Parks and Recreation in exchange for the former Coke plant and other parcels which the City now owns or will acquire through the Urban Renewal District. A fair trade would seem to require additional parcels from the City, some of which (possibly the former Oregon Department of Transportation property along Franklin Boulevard) may be currently owned by other government agencies. Multiple agency trades are certainly possible. We recognize that such a land trade would be complicated and might even involve special legislation, but it might be a long-term benefit to the University. The RRP and University would be freed of the cost of maintaining park land and would acquire land closer to campus and thus of more future value.

Automobiles and parking are a sensitive issue north of the tracks. RRP is ideally situated to encourage bicycle commuting. Some employees could leave cars in the parking lots at Autzen Stadium and walk, jog or bicycle across the footbridge to work. The Master Plan mandates bus transportation. This requires a roadway through RRP large enough to be used by city busses. Many critics oppose such a road, but much of the right of way would be close to the railroad tracks (hence, far from the river) since this land cannot be used for inhabited structures. We would encourage RRP employers to buy bus passes for all employees as the University has. If this were done, a considerable work force could commute by bicycle, bus or by automobile to Autzen Stadium. However, even if all employees used one of these modes of transportation, other people, some with limited mobility, would need access to the businesses and most would expect to arrive by car. The master plan envisions some parking structures near the tracks and some surface parking near each building. We find it hard to imagine that a building would be attractive to a business without some such nearby parking. It might be possible that busses and parking on the south side of the track would be adequate for some buildings in the Gateway Sector, but such an arrangement would involve removal of the physical plant and perhaps the acquisition of additional property.



**3. Governance:** We accept the discussion on Governance Structure under 5A in Frank Giunta's report as definitive. His suggestions for stream-lining procedures within the present governance structure are worth considering.

**4. Community Relations:** We have all been surprised to learn positive information about RRP which was news to us but which we might have expected to have learned long ago as part of our general knowledge of the University community. Conversely we are appalled by the amount of misinformation in general circulation. Diane Wiley, RRP Director, is the sole RRP employee. She is already doing more than one person can be expected to do, and cannot undertake a public information campaign. However the future viability of RRP as a University related development requires an increase in dissemination of information about the opportunities already there and reasonably to be expected in the future. Possibly a person already involved in public information with the University could be assigned a percentage of time to develop and disperse information on RRP. We suggest that a regular newsletter, a speaker's bureau and similar ideas be explored. The committee feels that some initiative in this area is essential. We are not asking for exaggeration, hyperbole and propaganda, but for accurate, timely information.

**5. Outreach:** A principal reason for the existence of RRP is the benefits which it can bring to the University and larger community through involvement. Thus both the management and the tenants must always be aware of the goal of more student and faculty involvement. Programs should be designed to encourage university and community members to interact with RRP. The whole site needs to be welcoming to the public. Open space needs to be designed with this goal

**6. Staffing and a Business Plan:** Only the President and his staff are in a position to judge whether enhanced staffing for RRP makes sense within the context of general under-staffing at the University of Oregon. On the one hand, because of the lack of any debt associated with RRP, the University is in no particular danger in letting development proceed at the present slow pace without additional funding and staffing. On the other hand, the potential benefits of RRP will almost surely be realized quite slowly with present staffing. We see real opportunities associated with better staff support for the director. This might involve part time clerical support, and (probably part time) public relations person working with both community information programs and potential tenants. More appropriate office space for the director is also needed.

It appears that an up-to-date business plan is currently lacking. With present staffing, a consultant may be needed to work with the RRP Commission to develop such a plan.

**7. Building Costs:** Competitive rental price for space at RRP is fundamental to attracting future tenants. The construction cost of the first building makes this difficult. Good environmental design can lower costs in the long run and should be a focus in cost saving efforts.

**8. Developer:** Neither the University of Oregon itself nor the City of Eugene can properly assume the role of an entrepreneurial developer for RRP. Up to now RRP has not engaged in any deficit financing and it probably should not. The University of Oregon Foundation Board and staff have a primary fiduciary responsibility for the funds they control. Nevertheless, we understand they have considered positively taking on at least part of the role of such an RRP developer. This would seem to have many advantages for RRP. Timely construction of buildings might best proceed before all the space has been leased, and it appears that RRP's inability to do this in the past has inhibited its growth.

**9. Review:** We hope the present review of RRP by those with little previous involvement has proved valuable, and feel that another review in about five years would allow the University and others involved with RRP to check actual events against the expectations reflected in Frank Giunta's and our own report. The present review comes five years after completion of the first building. This period seems a good compromise between too frequent reviews which might tend to leave things in constant turmoil and too infrequent ones which might allow RRP to develop a life of its own, not necessarily serving the needs of the University.

**10. Physical Plant:** Development of most of the remaining land on the south side of the tracks (the Millrace Sector) is impeded or impossible until some parts of the Facility Services complex are moved or consolidated.

Any reasonable right of way for a connecting road passes right through this area. Furthermore, since the master plan calls for removal of most of these buildings, there is concern that any upgrade to them might call the present land use and zoning permits into question. Suitable land for replacement on a new site is in short supply. The tract of land currently owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation along Franklin Boulevard has been mentioned as a possible site, but this use would surely be opposed by neighbors. The former Coke plant site, currently owned by the City of Eugene Urban Renewal District and assigned RRP, has many advantages as a site for some of the operations, but is too small (about 1.6 acres) to house the whole operation and is not currently owned by the University. Sites in Glenwood might be acquired but are too far away for efficient operation. If allowed under present zoning, consolidation in newer, more attractive and more efficient buildings near its present site would be a reasonable alternative. Some office space could be leased in RRP buildings temporarily to facilitate the rebuilding or permanently to reduce the total amount of space needed.

Under any scenario the steam plant will remain until it becomes obsolete, because of the prohibitive cost of removal. It can be cosmetically upgraded by plantings and other relatively low cost measures, and it does not block the most reasonable roadway. This is the approach contained in the current master plan.

Basically, we have no advice on this problem, except that it is a key challenge which needs active study. Whether the land on the South side of the tracks is used for RRP buildings as envisioned in the Master Plan, or RRP parking as has been suggested to us, or eventually becomes the future site of campus buildings, the Facility Services problem needs to be solved within five or at most ten years.

**11. Miscellaneous:** We include here a number of issues more specific than might have been expected from this review. They are suggestions for those with responsibility for RRP to consider. After we have spent so much time looking at RRP and thinking about it, it would be a shame not to leave a formal record of some ideas we thought worthwhile. There are other ideas in Frank Giunta's report, and we simply highlight some of our own.

We know that local hospitals sometimes engage in research and that this occasionally involves University faculty. If this were to lead to start-up companies or involve existing research firms, a link with RRP might be useful. A pre-existing affiliation with the hospitals would foster this. Possibly a member of the RRP Commission could be chosen to represent the hospitals.

During our discussions, the idea of adding housing to some buildings came up several times and seemed attractive to many of us. This would help tie RRP to the rest of the community as well as providing night time use and presence in the area. Apartments for use by visiting research faculty would be appropriate. Many Universities are beginning to provide housing for retired faculty who wish to stay in touch, and the location on level ground near campus, the riverfront park system, Franklin Boulevard and downtown would be attractive. Essentially the same considerations would make it attractive to students, employees or University faculty who wanted an apartment rather than a house. As RRP is built out, some restaurant facilities would be useful, and a resident population could help to make these economically viable.

A restaurant just east of Autzen footbridge has been part of the RRP Master Plan from the beginning. It would certainly provide a lovely setting for various University and RRP social occasions and would be attractive to town folk and visitors. If other RRP buildings are partially hidden by a tree covered setback, it would be one of only two buildings immediately on the south bank of the Willamette in the more than ten mile stretch between the I-5 bridge and the Beltline bridge. To some, this is one building too many, but to others it is a desirable enhancement which would allow the public to enjoy the river in a relaxed setting. It will not be economically viable for several years to come and would fall under our recommendation of needing another review before construction.

The University community already supports a number of restaurants and motels along Franklin Boulevard. RRP development will increase the customer base. Between the two linked populations there will be increased support for scientific, technical and research oriented business conventions. Privately owned and developed convention facilities in the area might be financially attractive and a useful.

Frank Giunta has suggested that the name ``Riverfront Research Campus" rather than ``Riverfront Research Park" would be in line with current trends and might subtly shift peoples' focus. Sometimes names are important and this one is worth contemp lating.

The report entitled "Report to Riverfront Research Park Review Committee Riverfront Research Park Study conducted byem Connaissance International" written by Frank Giunta and the document "Riverfront Research Park: Public Process" prepared by RRP should be considered part of this report. All correspondence received by the Committee and related documents are on reserve in Knight Library on the University of Oregon campus and will be maintained there for the rest of this academic year. This reserve material includes a copy of "Master Plan and Design Guidelines Riverfront Research Park, Eugene, Oregon" dated December, 1988 which contains a large amount of relevant material which is the basis of current zoning and land use permits.

---

[UO Home Page](#) · [Departments](#) · [Administration](#) · [News](#)

[Can't Find It?](#) © 1998, University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403; (541) 346-3111 [Feedback](#)