



November 13, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Campus Planning Committee

From: Liz Thorstenson, Campus Planning
Campus Planning and Facilities Management (CPFM)

Subject: **Record** of the November 10, 2020 Campus Planning Committee Meeting

Attending: Dean Livelybrooks (chair), Pamanee Chaiwat, Michael Griffel, Michael Harwood, Ken Kato, Terry McQuilkin, Cathy Soutar, Christine Thompson, Chuck Triplett, Laurie Woodward

CPC Staff: Liz Thorstenson (Campus Planning)

Guests: Craig Ashford (General Counsel), Selena Blick (Community Member), Sharon Blick (Nearby Nature), Jane Brubaker (CPFM), Paul Cziko (Ecology), Jeff Diez (Biology), Emily Eng (Campus Planning), George Evans (Economics), Allen Hancock (Community Member), Brent Harrison (PE & Rec), Jackson Kellogg (Community Member), Josh Laughlin (Cascadia Wildlands), Annika Mayne (ASUO Rep), Ella Meloy (ASUO Rep), Lynn Nester (PE & Rec), Aaron Olsen (Campus Planning), Eileen Otis (Sociology), Ben Prah (EMU), Matt Roberts (University Advancement), Bitty Roy (Biology), Shawn Rubino (EMU), Debbie Schlenoff (Biology), Anne Schwarz (CPFM), Sam Stroich (EMU)

CPC Agenda

1. **Campus Plan Amendment: North of Franklin Boulevard – Public Hearing and Final Draft Review**

Background: CPC staff introduced the purpose of the agenda item as described in the meeting mailing and reviewed the relevant key *Campus Plan* principles and patterns applicable to the project. Staff reviewed a brief overview of the meeting order, noting the public hearing would occur after the presentation, with committee discussion to follow, as time allowed with the possibility to continue any discussion at the next CPC meeting.

Campus Planning staff, Aaron Olsen, presented a recap of the work that has been done to amend the Campus Plan to incorporate university land north of Franklin Boulevard. He reviewed the planning process and explained the intent of the public hearing. Olsen reminded members of the action the committee would be taking, anticipated to occur at the next CPC meeting. He also summarized new feedback received in the week leading up to this meeting, which included appreciation for establishing the Natural Area and its definition, the need for accommodating recreation fields, and preserving the entire area north of the railroad tracks as a Natural Area. After the public hearing was closed, Olsen provided an update regarding density sub-areas in the proposal.

Public Hearing:

Public guests were invited to write their name in the chat or raise their virtual hand in Zoom to speak during the public hearing. CPC chair, Dean Livelybrooks, opened the public hearing and invited any members of the public attending to comment. There were thirteen members of the public who commented. After no additional public comment was received, the public comment portion of this meeting was closed. Public guests were invited to place their email address in the chat if they would like to receive a copy of this meeting's written record.

Public Comment: The following is a summary of questions and comments from public guests:

- Spoke about how in 1993 she helped establish the Whilamut Natural Area in Alton Baker Park and its importance to the community, including children through Nearby Nature program. Referred to support for UO 1988 plan regarding preserving natural habitat. Supports not considering riverfront land north of tracks for any development.
- Supports comments about the importance of preserving the area north of the tracks. Is on the rugby team and understands the importance of fields; however does not support using the area near the Willamette for recreation fields. The area is too important. It may be difficult to find other playing field locations; however, strongly supports the CPC considering other field locations. Referenced a proposed ASUO resolution.
- Spoke about not supporting the CUP and how UO did a poor job sharing project information with students and allowing project input. There has been opposition against development in this area for thirty years. Playing fields can be located somewhere else but not near the river.

- Shared that one of the best things in Eugene is to have beautiful open space along the river which is used by many seeking solace in the natural environment. There is support for preserving the open space. If development is allowed north of tracks (buildings, artificial turf), it will degrade the overall experience.
- Spoke about how, for decades, there have been two very different views about the appropriate use of the land north of the railroad tracks; development or natural area. Emphasized that the current draft proposal tries to finesse a balance but fails. The proposed wording is carefully written so fields are not stated outright, but feels that is the intent. Supports making the entire area a natural area (supported by the University Senate). Placing new recreation fields north of the railroad tracks forecloses this option. Supports accommodating CLUB Sports as well but new recreation fields should be located elsewhere (follow through on other recreation field locations already identified). Emphasized that artificial turf fields would be the worst use of this land because it would create a dead zone, not represent the university's goal to be green, and bad for habitat. The proposal should explicitly state that artificial turf fields and flood lit fields would not be permitted.
- Recognized that the Willamette area is not pristine, which is often used as an excuse to say restoration is not important. However, the area is still an important natural habitat and used by thousands of native species annually, such as geese. This area can be improved for natural habitat and can maintain its value as a space where nonhumans are allowed to exist, and we can share that space on occasion. There is support for designating the whole area north of the railroad tracks as a natural area. The need for playing fields resulted from the Hayward field project that didn't go through the CPC. Field alternates in that area should be explored, for example, where the outdoor tennis courts are located. The riverfront land has been used for years by hundreds of students for academic purposes. Building in this area does not make sense if we want to promote the university as a sustainable and green campus.
- Emphasized that if playing fields are located along river, the environment is lost permanently. There is no way to relocate the riparian zone. Recognized the need for playing fields but they can be moved to other locations. Uses the river's edge with students during classes. Lighting for security is acceptable but not for playing fields, which is disruptive (in addition to noise) to animals. Offered to provide scientific background information if requested.

- Presented a metaphor about thinking broadly about consequences of decisions, especially for things that matter most, in this case, the river. Referenced background information, “A History of Opposition: Students, Faculty and Community Members Concern about the Riverfront.”
- Posed a question about the existing natural grass playing fields, noting that there are notable differences between natural grass fields and artificial turf fields. Was there opposition originally or has it grown over time? Would those who have expressed opposition to playing fields be open to the idea of natural fields versus artificial turf fields? The current field is very close to river. It must be moved to accommodate restoration. Field siting options are limited, the proximity to campus is very important for students. In concept, relocating tennis courts is acceptable; however, one would have to consider how they would be relocated and funded.
- Spoke about how he has followed with deep interest proposals to develop the riverfront and opposed the creation of the Riverfront Parkway railroad underpass in 1997. It is understandable that UO needs to accommodate future development needs; however, it should have an environmental lens. The undeveloped area north of tracks provides no obvious financial gain to UO, but it is what makes Eugene so special. Emphasized that turf fields and flood lights would ruin the environment and character of the landscape, and that there are more suitable spaces for this type of development. Does not support this kind of development north of the tracks and encouraged to think about how safeguarding the greenway north of the tracks will benefit humans and nonhumans alike.
- Spoke of the continued and large opposition for development in this area from the community. The area north of the railroad tracks is a special place, leaving the area open for benefit of the community and environment. The proposed amendment language is not strong enough to show that this is a special place, that other locations for proposed development should be considered first, and this area should be identified as a last resort for development. The number of comments from the Open House and outreach was not very high, evidence that not many people were reached in the process. Restoration needs to begin immediately, after being on hold for so long, and should be tied to any other improvements.

- Thanked staff for their time and effort, and stated he has been involved in this proposal since the beginning. Recognizes the importance of the natural environment and the need for recreation fields. Supports the way the proposal balances needs. It does more than what the city requires with regards to increasing the riparian setback. Emphasized advances in recreational field lighting, which effectively prevent light spillover into adjacent areas. It is important to keep student needs and safety in mind when considering field locations, making off-campus options challenging.
- Referred to the prior senate resolution which rejected this proposal and asked why it is being proposed again. Urged the CPC to take development north of tracks off the table in the future. Emphasized that it is becoming more important as environmental issues are growing in importance, and that this will show that UO is a campus that is committed to the environment. Recognized that it is also very important to address the need for recreation fields and to do whatever is needed to find alternate locations for fields.

Discussion: The following is a summary of questions and comments from committee members:

- Expressed appreciation for the comments, and time and effort involved for those who have reviewed the proposal. There is a need to continue working to find appropriate spaces for students to recreate, and spaces that address the campus community's wants. Support for the comments except for the exclusivity; there are opportunities for a win-win situation - to continue to grow, attract students and meet student needs, as well as have beautiful spaces supportive of the environment. Support multi-purpose spaces, both indoors and outdoors.
- Supported member's prior comments. Asked how much land would be dedicated to open space compared to city land across the river? Noted that modern recreation fields have modern and ecologically friendly lighting, which is different than fields from 20 years ago. Many technological advancements have helped recreational fields and the environment work better together than in the past.
- There is room for both purposes to work well together. We can preserve what is valued while creating something that is environmentally friendly, fulfilling both purposes.
- Expressed appreciation for these conversations and how the proposal has benefitted from dialogue over time. This has led to a proposed new classification

of open space, Natural Areas, in the *Campus Plan*. This process is not meant to represent a vote on floodlit artificial turf fields; this is an opportunity to have a discussion about fields in this location in the future. Any votes to move this forward is not about fields, it is about providing the opportunity for future conversations about development of this space.

- There is pride for progress made in the last couple of years through all of the good, collaborative input. There is agreement that this process is not to vote on the location of artificial fields. There is opportunity for preserving space for recreation, whatever form that may take. Be cautious about overstating the intent, which could limit future growth, teaching, and/or the ability to accommodate students. Consider leaving room to accommodate new ideas. Agree with comments over concern of environment.
- There is appreciation for comments and the different perspectives. The win-win comment could mean different things, depending on the eye of the beholder. Satisfying the goal of preserving the space while still having playing fields may not be a win-win perspective to all.
- Clarify the distance between the river and the southernmost boundary of the Natural Area. Is it worth considering a larger natural area that extends more than 200 feet from the river? The area is about 500 feet from the tracks to river in some locations. There is support for seeing a larger amount of space.
- Clarify that the proposal for the Willamette Design Area sets aside 60% (25 acres) as a Natural Area and a 4% maximum building footprint in the remaining 40%, of which 7 acres could potentially be developed as fields.
- Clarify the meaning of pathways in the Natural Areas description. Thanks to Bitty Roy for asserting this definition and envisioning new kinds of areas.
- What are the next steps in this process? Will there be continued opportunities for editing the language?
- Is additional information needed to help committee members consider suggested wording changes and take action at the upcoming meeting? For example, it might be helpful to provide a brief recap regarding the results of the Recreation Fields Study. There is a rigorous site selection process that we go through as a committee, and nothing has been established for any site.
- The width of the future riparian edge is difficult to define because it will likely extend beyond the designated Natural Area. For example, the existing areas on campus that are not designated open spaces are not filled with buildings; there are many transitional landscape spaces.

- Regarding the other side of the river (north), it would be interesting for comparison to know some of those distances and mix of uses. A cross river comparison would be interesting and worth sharing again.
- There are various roles established for different UO committees. The CPC has the primary role to consider the proposed amendment. The CPC's responsibility is to take seriously all comments, considerations, and requirements before it provides a recommendation to the president. This includes considering input from the UO Senate along with the UO President's extensive response to the UO Senate's resolution, the ASUO, and many others. The CPC has spent numerous hours and meetings reviewing this proposal. The committee considers all perspectives and all university needs.

The following is a summary of additional questions and comments from guests (many of which were shared in the zoom chat):

- There is a huge difference between natural grass fields and turf. The grass has hundreds of geese, overwintering robins, other birds, and animals that use the space. Artificial turf is not alive and often toxic.
- There is support for keeping the whole area north of the tracks as a natural ecological area. If there are other areas possible for recreation field locations, that would make better sense.
- While considering UO development plans, consider looking into river based heat pumps. This addition to planning could further the UO environmental profile using existing infrastructure, still in place for UO, and also be a major contributor to fulfilling Eugene's Climate Action Plan 2 goals.
- The Whilamut Natural Area was preserved for passive recreation, defined as activities where the land acts on us, where our focus is not on the ball, the score, or the other players. A place where the land is not totally controlled by people and our experience recreating there is largely an interaction with the land. This vision could be used for the UO riverfront north of the railroad tracks.
- For the river setback of 200 feet, how far is that to the track's maximum distance?
- A 400-500 feet setback is what is recommended by ecologists along rivers.
- A setback of 200 feet versus 500 feet makes a big difference, and placing recreation fields in that location has a big impact on the environment; it greatly reduces the width of the habitat.

- This plan is not as good as what is happening on the other side of the river (north). The Natural Area on the north side of the river is much wider than 200 feet and the total acreage is much more than 25 acres.
- A minimum area for the Natural Area does not have to result in establishing a hard “build-to” line.
- If CPC approves the amendment, how is it explained to the UO Senate, the ASUO, and many other groups that their opinion does not matter? The University Senate and ASUO have made very clear in their statements that they would like all of the land north of the tracks designated as Natural Areas. How do you explain to these groups, as the CPC, that you’re not acknowledging this?
- The amendment wording does not seem to prioritize the actual restoration efforts. There is concern that no restoration of even the designated Natural Areas will occur if no specific proposals ever arise under continued gridlock. How can the wording be ameliorated to state that restoration of designated Natural Areas begins as soon as practicable?
- There is concern about the wording on page 8 of the proposal that “may not be easily accommodated at other locations.” Just because it is “easy” in some way does not mean better. Fields can be located anywhere, the river is in one place.
- Be careful to not predetermine the outcome by using words such as, “future development.” This should be: “*Any* future development.”

In response to questions and comments from committee members and guests, Olsen and Emily Eng provided the following clarifications:

- Of the current proposed Willamette Design Area, 25 acres is the Willamette Natural Area designated open-space, leaving 17 remaining acres. Of those 17 acres, 7 acres would be available for use as recreation fields. The remaining 10 acres, including other designated open spaces that extend into this area, would be available to support other types of development. The building development density coverage is set at 4%.
- Across the river (north) is Alton Baker Park, and east of there is the large Whilamut Natural Area.
- Lighting technology is different than it was 20 years ago. The current proposed amendment does not specify fixture types or recreation field materials; provides a framework for decisions about future development. The *Campus Plan* amendment allows for that conversation to occur when a project is identified

and funded. The project would go through the standard campus planning process.

- The river setback dimension is consistent with the CUP, which established a 200 foot setback from top of high bank. The river's edge varies in relation to the top of high bank.
- The Natural Area setback also surrounds the Millrace Outfall, so the natural area extends from the river all the way to the railroad tracks in places. The designated open space boundary is not intended to be a physical hard edge; there will be landscape areas and other outdoor areas that extend beyond the open-space boundary.
- The Willamette Natural Area Designated Open Space is 25 acres. An additional 7 acres could be developed into recreation fields within the Willamette Design Area.
- The wording in the Natural Areas definition about pathways being informal in nature means that the design of proposed pathways should be more informal in design (E.g., meandering in response to the natural river's edge and consider environmental sensitivity).
- The next steps in this process are to review the comments and suggestions, determine how they might inform additional changes, and then bring any additional changes to the committee for the final proposal review. The committee will be asked to take action and make a recommendation regarding the final amendment proposal at the next meeting (11.20.20).
- Staff can revisit information regarding the diverse areas around the site, for context, at the next meeting. One of the unique things about this site (and adjacent sites) is that there are many different ways to engage with the river.
- A wide range of opinions have been received. Staff is open to all and responds to all. The proposed amendment is designed to highlight what is important for future proposals to consider. This process does not identify projects. This amendment will add to the *Campus Plan* to help respond to future proposals that come forward in this area.

Action: No formal action was requested. Action will take place at the November 20, 2020 CPC meeting.