

The Oregonian

Portland considers allowing road next to South Waterfront Greenway extension

*By Brad Schmidt
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A second phase of the South Waterfront Greenway may end up with a new neighbor: a 70-foot-wide roadway with sidewalks.

That shift has the city's Design Commission concerned.

On Wednesday, the Portland City Council will consider allowing a new road to be built directly next to land set aside for a waterfront park in the South Waterfront District.

As originally envisioned back in 2009, Portland would build a 100-foot-wide greenway along the river and buildings would be developed to the west. On the other side of those buildings would be a newly built Bond Avenue featuring two lanes of northbound traffic.

But Oregon Health & Science University now wants the city to move the roadway 85 feet to the east so the road directly abuts the greenway.

Doing so would allow the university to develop its property more easily, officials said. University leadership hopes to create a campus setting with large buildings. But under the current plan, the road alignment bisects its property and would create a 90-foot-wide island that would be difficult for OHSU to develop.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees the Portland Parks Bureau, last week said she liked the idea of having buildings farther away from the greenway.

Even so, Portland's Design Commission voiced reservations about moving the road alignment before ultimately signing off in a 2-to-1 vote.

The street falls within a special design area that's expected to help merge the roadway with open space, including the use of pavers, curbless streets or cobblestone. Plans from 2009 called for a 44-foot-wide roadway, including parking and bike lanes, with 13-foot-wide sidewalks on each side.

In a letter sent to the City Council in December, members of the Design Commission questioned what impact the road realignment would have on the greenway.

"The Design Commission, as stated previously, could be supportive of the concept of a realignment," the wrote. "However, the Greenway deteriorates somewhat with a street closer to the Greenway. Therefore, the proposal should give back a little, but to what extent?"

OHSU officials offered to provide the city with an extra 10 feet of property between the road and greenway, according to records.

The city's plan, which heads to the City Council for a 2 p.m. vote, would instead call for a five-foot minimum between the road and greenway.

OHSU has also said it plans to build a commons area, west of Bond Avenue, that would open toward the greenway and would serve as publicly accessible space.

Last week, The Oregonian/OregonLive wrote about the first phase of the South Waterfront Greenway -- a \$15.1 million project that cost 2 1/2 times more than expected and opened six years late.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Hales pushing for greater use of deconstruction

By Garrett Andrews

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One construction sector is being heavily disrupted because of changing attitudes and new laws: demolition.

Builders and developers in the Portland area are being pressured to more consciously tear down buildings. Proponents of deconstruction (i.e., taking a structure apart with recovery of reusable materials in mind) have a host of arguments in their favor: environmental stewardship, salvage, historical considerations, public health and aesthetics. Now Portland Mayor Charlie Hales wants to make the practice the norm.

Hales' long-term goal, according to spokeswoman Sara Hottman, is to require deconstruction for some structures -- starting with houses age 100 or older. The Portland City Council on Wednesday will hear a proposal that would get the ball rolling. The potential ordinance would require deconstruction for structures built in 1916 or earlier, or if designated as historic resources.

The 1916 date was chosen because one-third of homes demolished in Portland were built before that year, and the city's Deconstruction Advisory Group, which prepared the proposed resolution, set one-third as a target for reducing demolitions.

The DAG was established by the council last summer to devise a plan to incentivize deconstruction. Its meetings were a "lively" affair due to the diversity of the interests represented on the committee, said DAG member Stephen Reichard, who runs the ReBuilding Center.

"We ran the gamut from folks who would like every single home in Portland deconstructed to those who would like none deconstructed," he said.

Hales' support for deconstruction is part of his larger agenda to address the negative effects of demolition, which are said to include harm to health and the environment. Another tool he's looking at to address this is revising residential infill development standards, according to Hottman.

The group United Neighborhoods for Reform recently issued a statement declaring reluctant support for the Hales' resolution.

“We are supporting the resolution as written,” the statement reads. “However, we ask the (Portland City) Council to amend the resolution to compress the timeline and more quickly expand the date requirement to affect more houses.”

Last year, approximately 300 single-family homes were demolished in Portland, and the mayor’s office is worried that number will rise as the economy improves.

One barrier to the advancement of deconstruction is that it typically costs between \$3,000 and \$6,000 more than demolition. To help, the city has offered grants to homeowners. So far, eight projects have received \$25,000, and the city has applied for additional grants from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

This is occurring at a time of drastic change in waste recovery. Closure of the SP Fiber Technologies paper mill in Newberg in November set off a chain reaction, according to Wood. The mill burned wood – mainly treated or processed wood – for energy, and received about 85 percent of the Portland-metro area’s wood waste. Wood formerly sold for use as fuel now goes to the landfill, and the cost to dispose of treated or processed wood is significantly higher.

Andy Webber, president of Konell Construction and Demolition Corp., called it a “real game-changer.”

“We went from being able to dispose of wood for free to paying \$97 per ton for disposal,” he said. “And that just gets passed right down the line.”

Webber’s business performs both deconstruction and demolition. He said many more downtown clients are now asking to keep materials like timber beams for reuse.

“We started out just doing (deconstruction) for the environmental aspect of it,” he said. “But obviously with the dump fees being what they are in Portland right now, and not being able to get rid of wood waste, I mean that’s obviously a driving factor in this.”

A year ago, approximately 50 to 60 percent of a demolished house in Portland was burned as fuel, said Shawn Wood, the city’s construction waste specialist. “Today it’s closer to 0 percent.”