

NE Neighborhood News

By Lee Perlman

Development news

Albina Fuel Lives

It has been nearly a year since a development team won design approval for a five-acre development on the Albina Fuel property on Northeast Broadway at 33rd Avenue, and yet there has been no visible activity there. Is the project still alive?

Yes, architect Brian Sweeney assures the Star. The sheer complexity of the venture, which includes 319 housing units and 62,000 square feet of commercial space, has made the permitting process unusually protracted. The developers are nearly through it. However, rather than undertake the messiest aspects of site development during the worst weather, they will probably hold off until the spring.

82nd Big Box hearing postponed

There will be a public hearing before city Hearings Office Gregory Frank on a proposed development on Northeast 82nd Avenue and Siskiyou Street, but the date has been set back from October 1 to October 16. It seems that SmartCentres of Canada failed to place signs at the site announcing the date 30 days in advance, as required by law.

SmartCentres wants to build 240,000 square feet of retail space, including a 190,000-square-foot building, on the 10-acre former landfill site. They are seeking a code modification from requirements that would limit retail uses on the property to a maximum of 60,000 square feet. SmartCentre representatives say they don't have a tenant for the property, but opponents say that in two-thirds of the company's shopping centers the anchor tenant is Wal-Mart.

The principal opponents are the Madison South and Roseway neighborhood associations, which between them have mobilized hundreds of volunteers. Both sides have hired attorneys and traffic consultants to bolster their cases.

Anticipating an unusually large amount of public testimony, Frank has scheduled the entire day for the hearing, starting at 9 a.m., with October 17 scheduled as a backup as well. It will be at 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave., in the building's largest hearing room. Under the Type III procedures in force for this case, Frank's decision can be appealed to the Portland City Council, and most observers say this is certain to happen no matter what the decision is.

Some neighborhood leaders speculated that SmartCentres failed to post the property deliberately. "Everyone knows you have to post a property before a hearing, and they have very experienced people working for them," one community leader said at a meeting last month.

City planner Sylvia Cate, who is preparing a staff recommendation on this case, dismissed this idea. The development team "was

pretty upset when they heard the hearing would have to be delayed," she says. "With all the people working on this case, this just fell through the cracks."