

By [Dora Totoian](#) • Of The News-Register • January 12, 2021 

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## Possible rec center site raises questions

The executive committee of Linfield University's board of trustees has drafted a memorandum of understanding about the potential partnership between it and the city of McMinnville for a future recreation facility on the school's commercial land, President Miles Davis told MacPac committee members Tuesday.

At the group's December meeting, City Manager Jeff Towery and Davis announced the two parties were exploring the possibility of siting the recreation center on an 80-acre, Linfield-owned parcel adjacent to the university.

Towery reiterated Tuesday the announcement was not meant to invalidate the committee's role.

"When we brought you together a year ago, we basically asked you to create a jigsaw puzzle," Towery said. "We still need that jigsaw puzzle, but instead of a jigsaw puzzle with sharp edges, it's now part of the larger puzzle, so we don't exactly know where the edges go."

Planning Director Heather Richards described various locations of at least 10 acres where a new recreation center could be built, noting there are few undeveloped parcels of land that size in and around the city limits.

In her brief descriptions of the various residential, industrial and commercial sites, Richards said among the factors she considered were their topography, proximity to major roads and accessibility to underserved communities.

The commercial location that is the Linfield site meets all of the criteria except for being centrally located, Richards said. She has concerns about Highway 99 being a barrier for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, but said the city is working on a program with ODOT to make the highway in that area safer and more comfortable for people not in cars.

"It's ironic because I had shared this presentation with both Jim (Kalvelage) and Susan (Muir) a couple months ago, and at the conclusion of the presentation, I had said to them, I think the best site is the Linfield site in terms of being able to bring an amenity like this to the community," Richards said.

The city and county also recently approved an urban growth boundary expansion plan awaiting approval from the state. It would primarily add land in the southwest corner of town, near the potential Linfield site.

Kalvelage, of Opsis Architecture, the city's consultant for the project, gave a more detailed presentation only on the Linfield location. He reviewed transportation, maps of income levels, environmental information and more surrounding the Linfield site.

Muir, director of the city's parks and recreation, said Kalvelage could provide detailed presentations for other sites if committee members requested.

Committee member Lisa Macy-Baker said knowing the nature of the potential Linfield partnership is important for the committee to. Macy-Baker later requested additional information about Wortman Park, which others seconded.

"Once we know what the partnership is going to be, whether this is a real estate transaction, I think that steers a lot for maybe many members of this committee," Macy-Baker said. "If it's a simple real estate transaction, maybe it doesn't, and Linfield looks even better, but if there's a lot of stipulations, that may lead some of us to want to know more about other sites."

Committee member Kitri McGuire said her opinion would be shaped depending on the terms for Linfield students' and staff's usage of the space, as she wants to prioritize access for the rest of the community.

Muir reminded the committee of its role and the four realms in which it will make recommendations and encouraged members to focus only on the location aspect of the issue currently before them. She added if there are concerns about potential partnerships, members could address them in conversations at the end of their work.

Muir also said details about the property partnership may not be finalized by the time the committee must make a recommendation to the council.

Committee member Marty Purdy added a plea for more information.

"If you're asking for this group to vote on, 'Hey, that location is a great site, let's do it,' I think we need to be aware of, what is the arrangement that the city is going to have with Linfield?" Purdy said. "That's being very transparent, and I don't think it's something that should be held later. I think we should know upfront."

Committee member Zack Geary, who also serves on the city council, tried to reassure the committee they have as much information as the city, which is slowly working through the details with Linfield.

In terms of residential properties, there are a few in the Riverside South area, but those property owners have expressed they do not wish to annex into the city from the urban growth boundary, Richards said. They are also isolated from other parts of the city, she added.

Other residential zone properties under consideration include a 22-acre lot near Redmond Hill Road and a 42-acre site owned by the McMinnville School District that is the location of a future second high school.

Industrial sites could be used for the recreation center under a certain rule, Richards said. One location is a 26-acre site on Colvin Court, but Richards said it has limited bicycle and pedestrian access.

Another is a 60-acre lot owned by McMinnville Water & Light on Riverside Drive, south of Joe Dancer Park. Richards told the committee only four of its acres are buildable. There's also a 200-acre location near Highway 18 that Richards said is close to underserved communities but would require many public improvements and is only accessible by the Yamhill River Bridge.

A commercial site off Highway 99 is close to underserved communities but has a varied and difficult topography and also has a creek running through it.

Wortman Park is another choice, and at 41 acres meets several of the MacPac's criteria and is already owned by the city, but is not in a central location, Richards said.

Earlier in the meeting, the group reviewed and approved its guiding project principles and site criteria, conversations begun in October.

The list of 12 project principles includes applying a diversity, equity and inclusion criteria, providing multi-use spaces and securing public support for a bond measure.

Geary said it was important to protect the limited park space that currently exists, while McGuire said park locations are worth considering if they meet other criteria. The language in the approved motion "prioritizes" the preservation of existing park lands.

Committee member Duane Bond expressed frustration at the lack of mention of a performing arts venue on the list. Muir said specific uses are not listed in the project principles, but suggested the committee could include a performing arts venue in recommendations for what it would like to see in the recreation center's master plan.

The committee also added language emphasizing the legacy aspect of the project at the request of member Dianne Haugeberg Shea.

The site evaluation criteria includes considerations for development capacity, economic viability, stewardship of funding, support for diversity, equity and inclusion, and regulatory approval, with additional emphasis on economic viability for local tourism and local business enhancement in the final version.

The committee's next meeting is Thursday, Feb. 4, at 6:30 p.m.