

Block 7 recommendation from city hearings officer expected this month

ALLAN CLASSEN

Opponents of plans to redevelop a residential block immediately south of the Multnomah Athletic Club got traction on at least one key issue raised at a city hearing last month.

Portland Hearings Officer Kenneth Helm has extended the hearing on a requested zone change and comprehensive plan amendment to accommodate the project. The MAC is partnering with developer Mill Creek Residential Trust to build a seven-story apartment building atop four levels of parking, the bottom two of which would have 225 stalls dedicated to Multnomah Athletic Club members. The structure would also have 14-16 hotel-type suites for MAC guests.

The institutional parking and



Opponents of the Block 7 development proposal donned "MACzilla" T-shirts last month and marched downtown to the public hearing. Photo by Allan Classen

guest suites are not allowed in the current residential zoning of Block 7, which is bounded by Southwest 19th, 20th, Main and Madison streets. That's why the MAC and Mill Creek

are requesting a change to commercial zoning.

To allay fears of broader commercial activity in the future, MAC and Mill Creek have promised that any approv-

al will be conditioned by a city-approved covenant prohibiting all other commercial activity.

But Jennifer Bragar, an attorney representing Friends of Goose Hollow, a nonprofit

recently formed to challenge the project, said such a covenant has a "major loophole" in that the city could revoke it later.

Furthermore, "the MAC is free to lobby the city at any time to override the covenant," Bragar said.

Sheila Frugoli, a senior planner with the city Bureau of Development Services, concurs, though for a somewhat different reason.

"After further consideration, staff agrees with Ms. Bragar," said Frugoli. "Because [the code] is silent on the myriad of uses that are allowed in the CX zone, in future years this condition would be interpreted to only limit housing units and hotel suites but allow other uses such as retail, office and institutional uses."

After considering opposing positions and evidence on the reliability of a restrictive covenant, Helm is expected to make his recommendation on the entire case later this month. The matter would then go the City Council for a decision. ■

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