



## Bigger-than-Bunyan draw ahead for Kenton business

Posted: Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Paul Bunyan's easily the best-known figure in Kenton. But as the revitalization of the North Portland neighborhood rolls forward, planned improvements for Denver Avenue could make the small business district the big attraction.

The streetscape effort is the second phase of the Portland Development Commission's Kenton redevelopment, which started in September 2005 with a look at existing, and potential, business for the area. Phase one inventoried area businesses and sites, identified places for potential redevelopment, and developed a sales and leasing strategy for retaining and attracting businesses.

That first phase set the stage for the work that's now happening with street improvement recommendations made by a PDC-convened committee of residents and business owners.

Designs proposed for new sidewalks show distinct patterns for store entries. Discussion of street trees considers species that won't grow to block business signs.

And public art – guaranteed by the project's 2 percent, or \$28,000, budget set-aside for art – could set up Kenton as a more-than-Paul destination.

Inspired by Bunyan, Regional Arts and Culture Council representatives are looking toward emerging artists working in the folk-art tradition. Playful pieces, said artist Valerie Otani, peppered through the business district would encourage visitors and "hopefully would build a kind of affection for spending time downtown, that it would be a destination for your every promenade."

Changes planned for the four blocks that house the neighborhood's cluster of businesses tie to ideas of Kenton as a destination. Widened sidewalks. Petite plaza spaces at street corners.

Spots for street furniture. A series of street trees and stormwater planters.

"We're looking at a combination of those elements to make the storefront enhancement work," said Mike Faha of Portland landscape architecture firm GreenWorks, which is teamed with SERA Architects as design consultants.

With the project in schematic design, the handful of committee members who turned out for a Wednesday meeting got down to details: Six or 12-inch curbs? Cobblestones or no cobblestones in the sidewalk patterning? What about benches? And lampposts?

As the committee's work continues, the larger city review process is still to come. Schematic designs will be presented during an open house in October. GreenWorks and SERA will hand project reigns to the Portland Office of Transportation this winter. The project is expected to go before City Council, the PDC and the PDC's Interstate Corridor urban renewal area advisory committee in early 2008. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2009.

As for tall Paul, his already big presence is slated to get stronger. Landscaping will screen the background distractions, making the ax-carrying, checkered shirt-sporting folk legend pop at the district's north entrance.

"Really make Paul stand out against that little wood," Otani said.

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