



Rockwood: 5 years later, millions wasted, the former Fred Meyer property continues to languish

Once the 'heart' of a thriving middle-class community, Rockwood now remains on life-support

Ask anyone in East County to describe Rockwood and you'll likely hear them say "slum", "trouble", or simply "stay away".



From everything to nothing

Not long ago -- or so it seems, Rockwood was a vibrant community, serving the regional needs of folks living in unincorporated East Multnomah County between the cities of Portland and Gresham. Whatever your need, Rockwood had it: grocerers, retailers, furniture, restaurants & fast-food, services, medical and more. Rockwood was buzzing with activity.

Those days are gone along with businesses like Fred Meyer, GI Joes, Girrods, Star Furniture, Rockwood Lanes, Fred's Travelrama, the laundromat, the

urgent-care, Burger King, KFC, Dairy Queen, Winchell's, Skippers, and countless others.

Ignored for years by local government, Rockwood has been in decline for decades. Crime-infested, and poverty-sticken. Today Rockwood is fighting for its very survival.

Urban renewal failure

In 2003 Gresham voters approved a 20-year urban renewal district bond measure to rebuild Rockwood after Fred Meyer closed due to rising crime and continued theft. The Gresham Redevelopment Commission (GRDC) was formed and a plan to revive Rockwood created.

Please see **ROCKWOOD**, Page 3

Aircraft traffic to increase this summer over Wilkes East during airport runway construction.



Get ready for increased air traffic as PDX extends their runways.

North Runway project underway

Wilkes East residents may notice a change in aircraft flight activity as Portland International Airport begins major runway improvements starting May 1st through October 31st 2009.

wilkeseastna.org

During the six-month closure of the north parallel runway jet aircraft will use the south runway and will follow noise abatement procedures that direct them over the Columbia River corridor to minimize overflights of residential areas.

The south runway's east takeoff and approach will increase air traffic directly over the Wilkes East neighborhood -- particularly in the Sandstone area.

Runway work will continue for the next 3 years during the construction seasons spanning May-October 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/366

Everybody's Invited!

Wilkes East Neighborhood

ANNUAL MEETING
Monday Aug 24, 2009 7PM

St Aidan's Church
174th & NE Glisan

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- Aircraft traffic noise increase
- Reynolds District layoffs
- 181st traffic improvements
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Expect delays and weekend closures along NE 181st Ave thru June during Signal Improvement construction



Signal upgrades, ramp improvements, and pavement repairs are underway. Much needed traffic changes come to West Gresham.

According to the City of Gresham Project Manager and City Engineers the long awaited NE 181st Ave Corridor Signal Improvements project has begun.

Linda Kidby, City of Gresham spokesperson says "signal upgrades, ramp improvements, and pavements repairs are underway right now and should be completed soon" to relieve traffic congestion through this busy area.

Expect delays and weekend closures

Construction workers are currently making improvements to all of the handicap accessible sidewalk ramps at the intersection of NE San Rafael St at NE 181st Ave.

Please see **SIGNALS**, Page 3

Did You Know? Gresham has 305 miles of streets, over 20,000 signs, 7,500 street lights and 96 traffic signals

Wilkes East Neighborhood Association Newsletter

Published quarterly. Over 1500 copies distributed throughout Wilkes East

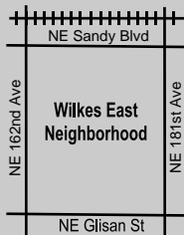
The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association (WENA) is a non-profit organization in Gresham, Oregon. Deadline for submission is the 10th of the month prior to publication. Submit material to info@wilkeseastna.org. WENA reserves all rights, and all copy will be edited for clarity and length. PDF version available online at the WENA website: www.wilkeseastna.org

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BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30PM. See website for details and location.



Reynolds School District lays off 149 teachers, more layoffs planned. Middle School students protest budget cuts.

Going from bad to worse

The Reynolds School District is laying off 149 teachers as of Aug. 31, with the bulk of the layoffs coming among those hired in the past three years.

Faced with slashing almost \$15 million from its 2009-10 budget, the district also will announce further layoffs, including among its music education staff as well as support-staff employees, according to Andrea Watson, district spokeswoman.

The teacher layoffs break down as follows: 5 teachers hired between 1996 and 2001; 42 teachers hired between 2001 and 2006; and 102 hired between 2006 and 2009.

Reynolds Middle School students protest planned budget cuts

Students at Reynolds Middle School demonstrated against cuts planned for next year's Reynolds School District budget, the afternoons of June 1 and 2 outside their school and outside Fairview City Hall on June 2.

Maria Calderon, an eighth-grader, said she was one of between 50 and 75 students who took to the streets June 1 to protest the district's plan to increase class sizes, decrease athletic funding and lay off 149 teachers to help close an almost \$15 million budget gap.

Jessica Elliott, also in the eighth grade, particularly criticized teacher layoffs. "Cutting down our teachers means less one-on-one time," she said.

Kenneth Loth, an eighth-grader, said "We're trying to get everybody to understand our plight, that there is money that could be put to better uses."

Full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/374

Commissioners ask Rockwood residents to be realistic about the East County Justice Center.

The debacle continues. Budget overruns, poor leadership, and tough economy plague chronically delayed project in Rockwood.



Stalled for decades, project now lacks support

Multnomah County Commissioner Diane McKeel told a crowd gathered to fight for a

East County justice center in Rockwood that there's not enough board support to build the long-delayed courthouse project anywhere in Gresham because of the economy. The community should stop fighting for location and push commissioners to support building it at all, she said.

Original plans called for a justice center to be built in Rockwood, which has been plagued by crime and disinvestment. But Wheeler proposed the project, which has been stalled for decades, be moved to downtown Gresham because it would save about \$7 million.

Tough economy, budget deficits

In tough economic times, governments aren't building new facilities, both McKeel and Wheeler said. So while the other three commissioners support a facility, they don't necessarily support building one now while the county faces a two-year \$46 million budget deficit.

Please see **JUSTICE CENTER**, Page 3

Check this out! www.CrimeReports.com for the latest on criminal activity in your neighborhood

Get involved! Start your own Neighborhood Watch. See www.wilkeseastna.org/node/180 for details!

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2 VACANCIES

Mention you saw it in the Wilkes East Neighborhood newsletter!

4th ANNUAL
CAPRI TERRACE
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FRI•SAT
JULY 10-11
9AM-3PM

NE Oregon St
165th - 172nd

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ROCKWOOD (from page 1)

In 2005 the new urban renewal commission bought the 6.5 acre Fred Meyer property at 185th & SE Stark St for \$8.1 million and tore down the old building for what would become a "cultural marketplace" with homes and businesses to anchor the new Rockwood Town Center.

Across SE Stark St the county would build a new justice center on the old bowling alley site with the assistance of \$2 million in urban renewal funds. The county bought the land and pushed the businesses and the tax dollars they paid off the property and out of Rockwood.

The future for Rockwood looked bright. Urban renewal appeared to be working and was expected to generate \$92 million in new taxes.

Unfortunately things changed.

Today there's no cultural marketplace or justice center - only empty gravel lots, and vacant buildings.

Escalating costs, mismanagement

Ballooning costs from \$18.65 million to \$42.9 million forced a scaled-down justice center to relocate to downtown Gresham. Failure to attract a commercial anchor tenant has required multiple redesigns of the proposed marketplace - costing millions in urban renewal funds and lost tax revenue.

And now after 15 months, a proposal by Williams & Dame Development (*the most recent developer hired to oversee the project*) to locate a YMCA on the marketplace site was rejected May 5, 2009 by Gresham's redevelopment commission citing a non-profit would not pay property taxes necessary to fund other urban renewal projects. Shortly thereafter the commission's relationship with Williams & Dame ended.

What's next?

The GRDC wants to hold a retreat to reshape its vision for redeveloping the old Fred Meyer site. For now it's discussing interim uses for the property while waiting for the economy to turn around.

An idea to create a temporary ethnic farmers market this summer at the marketplace site is on hold, but urban renewal commissioners are considering a proposal to build soccer fields on the expanse of gravel to cover-up the blight.

Meanwhile, five years of the 20-year urban renewal bond have past and the only changes made in Rockwood have been for the worse.

For now Rockwood will just have to "wait and see" what's next for its future.

See the full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/381 n

SIGNALS (from page 1)

Due to the nature of the asphalt repairs and the high traffic volume along NE 181st Ave city workers will need to close several intersections in the coming weeks. All construction repairs are expected to be completed by the end of the month

Smart traffic signals coming

Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System (SCATS) signal improvements are under development right now and are scheduled for implementation in September 2009. SCATS will provide adaptive signal timing technology to expedite rush-hour traffic along NE 181st Ave from Interstate 84 south to Rockwood, one of West Gresham's most congested traffic corridors.

See the full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/380 n

Did You Know? The City's wastewater treatment plant treats an average of 13 million gallons of wastewater per day.

JUSTICE CENTER (from page 2)

What's next for Rockwood?

Residents seemed resigned once hearing the commissioners speak, and the questions centered on what would be done with the vacant Rockwood land that the county purchased for the site, and whether there'd be adequate parking and security. Residents feared they would get promised something else and then get nothing.

Blame and excuses abound

County Commissioner Ted Wheeler, who inherited the justice center debacle when he came into office, said the project has been devastated by poor leadership and it's time to stop discussing the courthouse and move forward.

See the full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/364 n

Everything Nadaka: Recent events, grants, and a possible new expansion. Preserving urban habitat for tomorrow.

Great Things Are Happening at Nadaka Nature Park



Hollydale Elementary students, teachers, and parents remove invasives from Nadaka Park

Nadaka Nature Park is a lovely 10 acre natural area of second generation Douglas Fir forest with an under-story of native plants in the Wilkes East Neighborhood. Nadaka offers a quiet, woody escape with it's .46 mile walking trail loop and an open meadow on the south. The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association (WENA) is actively working to restore this natural area by removing invasive blackberry, ivy, and holly with volunteer work parties. Entrance to the park is near NE 175th & NE Pacific St.

Recent events at Nadaka Park

So far in 2009, WENA's Friends of Nadaka group has organized over 10 invasive removal cleanups at the park including 75-90 Hollydale Elementary students, teachers & parents; and a SOLV Earth Day event with more than 30 volunteers.

Please see **NADAKA**, Page 4

Volunteer!
 Help Restore
 Our Urban Habitat

Nadaka Nature Park
 17500 NE Pacific St

- Sat Jul 11 9AM-2PM
- Sat Jul 25 9AM-2PM
- Sun Aug 2 9AM-2PM

Sponsored by
Friends of Nadaka

Zimmerman House Tours
 Monthly • Third Saturday
10AM - 3PM

Zimmerman Park
 17111 NE Sandy Blvd
 Gresham OR

Fairview-Rockwood-Wilkes
 Historical Society
 Visit www.frwhs.org

NADAKA (from page 3)

May 28th the Audubon Society of Portland organized a morning stroll to explore the natural and human history of this unique neighborhood nature park and to begin documenting the bird species inhabiting Nadaka.

Grant monies for Nadaka

WENA's Friends of Nadaka recently received a Metro 'Nature in Neighborhood' matching grant totaling \$24,000 for improvements at Nadaka. The monies will be used to purchase tools & gloves, barbed wire removal on the park's south side, dog waste stations, trash can, bench, new native plants and more. More than 40 groups applied for grants, 13 were selected. The matching portion for this grant requires 400 volunteer hours. Lee Dayfield with Friends of Nadaka says "we need everyone in the neighborhood to volunteer their time to make this grant work". Also included in this grant is a project to identify birds in Nadaka and to build bird and bat houses. The process of bird identification has begun and anyone interested in helping is urged to contact WENA.

Possible Nadaka expansion

In addition, WENA's Friends of Nadaka is working on a capital grant from Metro to purchase the 2 acre parcel of land adjacent to Nadaka's south edge. Dayfield added "It is our hope a community garden, fruit tree orchard and perhaps a nature based play area could be built on this property". WENA has developed partnerships in these grant efforts with the Audubon Society, Trust for Public Lands, City of Gresham, St Aidan's

Church, Rockwood Neighborhood Association, HB Lee Middle School, Friends of Trees, Columbia Slough Watershed Council, and People for Parks.

How you can help

Volunteer cleanups at Nadaka are regularly scheduled. Upcoming cleanups are: Sat, July 11th 9AM-2PM; Sat, July 25th 9AM-2PM; and Sun, Aug 2nd 9AM-2PM. Cleanup information is always posted on the fence at Nadaka. All you need to bring are your own work gloves, a water bottle, and a willingness to meet your neighbors and work in the park. Tools and refreshments are provided. If you cannot participate in the cleanups but would like to donate snacks or drinks for the volunteers that would be great.

For more information or to volunteer with Friends of Nadaka contact Lee Dayfield by phone 503-998-1044, email leedayfield@wilkeseastna.org, or visit www.wilkeseastna.org.

See the full story at: wilkeseastna.org/node/377.

A special thanks

WENA and Friends of Nadaka would like to extend a big 'Thank you' to Wilkes East resident Jim Kunkel for mowing the area outside of Nadaka Nature Park along NE Pacific St. n

Did You Know? Letting your faucet run for five minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60-watt light bulb run for 14 hours. (EPA, 2008)



2009 Local Farmers Markets

Fairview Farmers' & Artists' Market
Fairview City Hall, 1300 Village St
Thursdays, 4-8pm
May - October

Gresham Farmers Market
3rd and Miller St, Gresham
Saturdays, 8:30am-2pm
May - October

Hollywood Farmers' Market ☑
NE 44th & NE Hancock
Saturdays, 8am-1pm
May - October
Saturdays, 9am-1pm
November until Thanksgiving

Lents International Farmers' Market ☑
SE 92nd and SE Foster Road
Sundays, 9am-2pm
Mid June - Mid October
Oregon Trail Food Stamp Market

Montavilla Farmers Market
SE 76th and SE Stark St
Sundays, 10am-2pm
Mid June - October
plus November 8th & 22nd

Parkrose Farmers Market ☑
NE 118th & NE Shaver St
Parkrose HS West Parking lot.
Saturdays, 8am-2pm
May - October
Oregon Trail Food Stamp Market

Portland Farmers Market ☑
SE 20th & SE Salmon St.
Thursdays, 3:30-7:30pm
May - September
Oregon Trail Food Stamp Market

Portland Farmers Market ☑
Portland State University
South Park at SW Harrison.
Saturdays, 8:30am-2pm Mid March - October
Saturdays, 9am-2pm November - December
Fall hours (Nov-Dec) 9:30am-2pm
Oregon Trail Food Stamp Market

Troutdale Farmers' and Artists' Market
551 E Historic Columbia River Highway
Downtown Troutdale
Saturdays, 10am-2pm
April - October

rain or shine!

WE

**Wilkes East
Neighborhood**

Open to all residents and businesses
in the Wilkes East Neighborhood.
Be A Part Of Your Community,
Plan To Attend.

ANNUAL MEETING
Monday Aug 24, 2009 7PM

St Aidan's Church, 174th & NE Glisan

Scheduled Topics

- **State of the Neighborhood**
- **Owens Corning Plant Update**
John Mc Clellan Plant Mgr.
- **NE Halsey & 181st Improvements**
Jonathan David, Gresham Transportation Dept
- **Port of Portland - Extension of runway & noise**
Jerry Gerspach, Noise Abatement Specialist
- **Neighborhood Liaison to the Port of Portland**
Kelly Sweeny
- **Nadaka Park Improvements & Clean-Up**
Lee Dayfield
- **Election of Board**

Join Your Neighbors. Get involved. Make a difference!