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Trammel Crow hopes to break ground in August for a facility with space for Oregon Research Institute

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A developer plans to move ahead this summer with a \$17 million office for the Eugene-based Oregon Research Institute in the Riverfront Research Park near the University of Oregon campus.

The developer, a unit of real estate giant Trammel Crow Co., hopes to break ground on the four-story, 79,800-square-foot building in August and complete the building by September 2010, according to paperwork submitted to the state.

The building would sit on about 4 acres in the western section of the 67-acre UO-owned research park, near the headquarters of the Eugene Water & Electric Board. All existing development in the research park is at its eastern end, north of Franklin Boulevard.

On Friday, the State Board of Higher Education will decide whether to approve a long-term ground lease for the 4 acres between the university, which owns the research park land, and developer TC Eugene LLC, a unit of Trammel Crow.

Trammel Crow plans to lease 69,000 square feet of the new building to ORI, a nonprofit research institute, and 10,800 square feet to the Educational Policy Improvement Center, a UO spinoff that consults with school systems nationwide on ways to improve high school curriculum to better prepare students for the transition to college, according to the summary provided to the education board.

Staff members advising the board recommend approval of the ground lease.

The lease would mark the end of a long search by ORI for new offices.

ORI was founded in 1960 by a group of UO faculty. The nonprofit institute conducts behavioral and health studies, primarily for the National Institutes of Health.

ORI's 250-person work force is split between two locations: a leased building on Franklin Boulevard and one leased floor at 1600 Millrace Drive, an existing building in the research park.

ORI made a commitment to lease most of the new building in the research park after false starts at other sites in downtown Eugene.

"We're cautiously optimistic," ORI Executive Director Cynthia Guinn said.

Six years ago, ORI planned to construct its own building on the site of the former Sears building downtown. ORI scrapped that plan when it failed to win a federal grant to help fund construction. Later, ORI was considered a possible tenant in the downtown Centre Court building, but that idea also has not advanced.

The new building in the UO research park would be the third major office building in the research park.

Trammel Crow plans to seek silver-level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for the building, which is designed by Soderstrom Architects of Portland. The certification is the nationally accepted benchmark for energy-efficient buildings. The project will include reduced-flow water fixtures, high-efficiency lighting, native landscaping and efficient irrigation systems.

The university previously entered ground leases with private developers for the other two large buildings in the research park. In 1992 a Salt Lake City developer built a 60,000 square-foot research office building. Then, six years later, a Portland developer constructed a 47,000-square-foot office and lab building. Both buildings are privately owned and managed, and fully leased.

The long-term ground lease would require the developer to pay land rent of \$1.47 million up front for an initial 55-year term, to be paid in four installments between October 2009 and September 2010. There would be four possible 10-year renewals.