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[Foes drop appeal of ORI project \(http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/cityregion/25202076-41/park-building-research-group-project.csp\)](http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/cityregion/25202076-41/park-building-research-group-project.csp) |

Opponents of the development say they'll concentrate on making sure it complies with local land use laws

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A group opposed to the construction of a new building in the University of Oregon's Riverfront Research Park has dropped its appeal of the project.

The group, Connecting Eugene, on Friday said that rather than pursue the case with the Oregon Court of Appeals, it will concentrate on ensuring that the riverfront building project complies with local land use laws.

The group remains critical of the project, which will create a new home for the Oregon Research Institute, but said its efforts will be better spent making sure the building meet standards in the Riverfront Research Park's master plan.

Diane Wiley, the research park director, said she was pleased by the group's decision and is confident that the new building will meet land use and master plan requirements. No date has been set for construction to begin, but engineering work has begun.

"This is great news," Wiley said. "This is one obstacle out of the way."

But Jan Wilson, an attorney at the Eugene-based Western Environmental Law Center who represents Connecting Eugene, said the ORI building design does not appear to comply with the park's master plan. She said Connecting Eugene will challenge the project on those grounds while continuing to urge university and research park officials to move the building to a more acceptable location in the park.

"We don't think they can come up with something that complies" with the master plan in the current location, Wilson said.

The 80,000-square-foot, \$17 million ORI building would be built at the west end of the 67-acre research park and would be the first building in the research park that would be located along the riverfront north of the railroad tracks that run through the park.

Several research park buildings already exist south of the tracks, and Connecting Eugene believes the ORI building should go on one of the remaining undeveloped sites in that area, which lies farther back from the Willamette River.

Connecting Eugene was formed by a group of UO students and faculty members strongly opposed to building on the riverfront site and has grown to include others who want the project moved.

The UO student government, University Senate and community activists also oppose the site, saying it's not an appropriate use of the city's little remaining undeveloped riverfront.

Others in the UO community, the Eugene Chamber of Commerce and a group of business owners support the project.

Connecting Eugene opposed a research park request last year for a three-year extension of the master plan and conditional use permit that governs development of the park, which lies along the west bank of the Willamette River between the UO and Alton Baker Park.

But the city of Eugene's planning director approved the extension, and that decision was upheld by a city hearings officer and the state Land Use Board of Appeals.

Rather than continue the appeals, Wilson said the opposition group wants the university to come up with a construction plan for the riverfront site that meets both master plan and city requirements. And that's something she doubts it can do.

"This is our way to make them put their cards on the table," she said. "Let's see what you've got."

In particular, Wilson said the current project violates master plan language calling for phased development, pointing out that areas south of the tracks were supposed to be developed before anything was built north of the tracks.

She also said the project fails to meet the plan's goal of keeping a view corridor open from Alder Street to the river.