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**[Ruling favors research park \(http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/cityregion/25002661-41/decision-park-research-project-riverfront.csp\)](http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/cityregion/25002661-41/decision-park-research-project-riverfront.csp) |**

## **The state Land Use Board of Appeals sides with the University of Oregon's controversial riverfront plan**

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*The Register-Guard*

Posted to Web: **Friday, Jul 9, 2010 02:10PM**

Appeared in print: **Friday, Jul 9, 2010, page B3**

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A state appeals board has upheld a decision by Eugene planners that gives the University of Oregon three more years to construct additional buildings at the Riverfront Research Park along the Willamette River.

The decision by the state's Land Use Board of Appeals moves the university another step closer to construction of a controversial building to house the Oregon Research Institute. That project has drawn strong opposition because it would be the first in the 67-acre park to be built directly on the riverfront and north of the railroad tracks that divide the site.

Opponents want the university to throw out the existing master plan for the research park and start a new planning process. The existing plan, along with a conditional use permit that allows construction, was approved by the city 20 years ago.

An attorney for Connecting Eugene, the group appealing the ORI project, said they still are reviewing the decision. Group members have 21 days to decide whether to take the case to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Group members issued a statement saying that although the decision upholds the three-year extension, the university still can choose to build on a less controversial site.

"Although we would certainly prefer to see the master plan (for the research park) updated, today's decision does not foreclose the opportunity to re-invent our riverfront north of the railroad tracks using sustainable designs and holistic ideas," Christo Brehm, a UO graduate student and co-founder of Connecting Eugene, said in the

statement.

Diane Wiley, the research park director, welcomed the decision.

“It’s great news,” she said. “It’s the step we anticipated, and we want to get under construction.”

The ORI project is favored by the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, a number of local business owners and some in the UO community.

But it is opposed by many at the university, including the student government and the UO Senate, which has voted twice against developing the riverfront parcels.

Wiley said the project developer, Trammell Crow, will make the decision on whether to proceed with construction or wait to see whether another appeal is filed. The developer so far has held off while the project was under review.

The company plans to build the 80,000-square-foot, \$17 million building for ORI at the west end of the research park. The site is just east of the Eugene Water & Electric Board’s former pole yard.

Opponents not only object to the building’s location but also to plans for a 200-space parking area that will flank the building on three sides. But Wiley said the design goes to great lengths to make the building and the parking area environmentally friendly.

The appeal challenged the city’s decision to extend the 20-year conditional use permit by another three years.

Opponents argued that the extension wasn’t allowed under city ordinances and the terms of the master plan. But LUBA ruled that the city correctly interpreted and applied the rules.