

Multnomah County launches process to sell North Williams Avenue property



Multnomah County will consider selling the Port City Development property on North Williams Avenue (Casey Parks/The Oregonian)

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Multnomah County is officially seeking to unload the North Williams Avenue property that has been listed as surplus since shortly after the county acquired it last year.

On Thursday, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners approved a surplus property report for the 1.1-acre complex, which sits on a residential section of North Williams – a street where development is booming. The county will seek more public input and craft a plan for disposing of the property before asking prospective buyers parties to submit their plans for the land. **“It would be our desire to come back with a proposal within the four or five months,” County strategic projects lead Mike Sublett told the board.**

County facilities manager Michael Bowers said his team is exploring the possibility of using urban renewal money to redevelop the property. The land sits within the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area, where Mayor Charlie Hales this year vowed to commit an extra \$20 million to pay for housing projects. According to the surplus property report, several interested parties have already contacted the county about the North Williams property. But it will be some time before a new owner moves in. Albertina Kerr leases the three-building complex from the county, and the lease doesn't expire until June 30, 2016. **Albertina Kerr leaders have no interest in buying the property, Sublett said.**

The former battery plant, which came into the county's hands to fulfill a debt, has never been used for a county purpose. Port City Development Center owned the property until last fall. The agency, which serves adults with developmental disabilities, turned the land over to the county settle a \$1.5 million debt it owed on a county loan to help buy the land and clean up environmental damage from the battery plant.

County staff will spend the next several months gathering public input, and could return before the board in January with a more concrete plan to dispose of the property. Contamination from the old battery plant could arise as a complication. Although the property is no longer on the state Department of Environmental Quality's list of contaminated sites requiring cleanup, a layer of concrete covers potentially contaminated ground. Developers could run into obstacles if they wanted to excavate on there.

--Kelly House

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