



America's Newspapers

## City grew, but not according to plan

Oregonian, The (Portland, OR) - Thursday, February 22, 2007

Author: GOSIA WOZNIACKA, The Oregonian

SERIES: SMALL CITIES, BIG CHALLENGES (3rd part of an occasional series)

SUMMARY: Despite a dearth of businesses, Fairview's leaders hope the community will evolve into a full-service town

"If you're not on the council or the planning commission, you really don't know where Fairview is anymore. There really aren't those lines." -- Jan Shearer 40-year Fairview resident

Fairview Village, a shiny planned community, was supposed to be a prime example of new urbanism, the architectural trend that re-creates the look and feel of a small town.

What's more, officials hoped the village, built 10 years ago, would serve as a model for the rest of the city.

But the vision of a close-knit, economically self-sufficient community has not fully materialized in the village or citywide. Instead of streets brimming with pedestrians headed to shops, cafes and churches, the city's developed land is dominated by one element: residences.

When compared with other cities its size, Fairview's commercial and industrial development is "limited," city officials admit. Little commerce or industry has arrived, partly because developers see Fairview, population 9,585, as a bedroom community that's not as attractive to retail or other businesses.

But city officials say they are not giving up on the vision of a full-service small town. Using zoning, they hope to hold out until more commercial development arrives. In the meantime, the city is trying to connect and serve an ethnically and economically diverse group of residents without the support of civic organizations or a substantial business base.

Fairview Mayor Mike Weatherby likes to talk about the "Mayberry feel" of his city, referring to the small fictional town that was the setting for two 1960s television series.

"The whole goal and real emphasis of my vision is a sense of united community, with everyone enjoying a good quality of life and sense of pride in the city," he said.

Key to that vision is economic development. According to city statistics, more than 60 percent of developable land in 2004 was zoned residential, and 15 percent was zoned commercial. But while the residential land is close to filled, industrial and commercial land remains mostly vacant.

So far, the only real shopping destination in Fairview Village is a Target store. Most shops on Village Street sit empty, and there is little pedestrian traffic. Besides a fitness center, a car wash, a couple of service stations and two restaurants, there are few businesses in the entire town. Industrial development includes an international test facility for lift trucks, a sawdust storage facility and a fruit packing operation.

City officials continue to hold out hope for California developer Mark Donati of Lexmar Development, who holds the remaining land in Fairview Village. They want him to bring commercial development to the neighborhood, but his last proposal to the city was for more housing.

"He hasn't yet given us the proposal we want," said Weatherby. "We'll hold out for it. If nothing happens, nothing happens."

This week, the City Council was to consider rezoning some residential parcels along Sandy Boulevard for commercial use, hoping to draw small businesses to that area.

But attracting a grocery store or restaurant may not be easy, said Allen Grant with Grant Development Co., a Vancouver-based developer.

"Commercial development requires good access, and Fairview doesn't have that many locations that are attractive to commercial or retail developers," said Grant, who developed Fairview Terrace, a gated community of 196 townhouses on Sandy Boulevard.

What Fairview has in excess are conditions that make it attractive to residential developers.

"It's a small community that people want to live in, the property was available at the right price, and the city itself is cooperative in the development process," Grant said.

Another challenge to the small-town feeling is that residential areas have mushroomed far beyond the edges of the original "old town," making the city feel disjointed, residents say.

Jan Shearer, who moved to Fairview 40 years ago, saw the berry fields, tracts of woods and wetlands swallowed by hundreds of homes, apartments and townhouses as the city's population grew by tenfold.

"If you're not on the council or the planning commission, you really don't know where Fairview is anymore," she said. "There really aren't those lines."

Some residents of old town, where city hall, a train depot (including a trolley from Portland) and local businesses once thrived, felt uncomfortable when the shiny Fairview Village was built, Shearer said.

"People were afraid that the city wasn't going to pay any attention to us," she said.

For Mayor Weatherby, increasing pride in old town, which city officials now call "historic old town" --and in Fairview as a whole --is one way to bring unity back to the city. So is building connections between residents by organizing a farmers market, community picnics and fairs and a chili cookout, as well as opening a community center and improving roads and bus service for residents.

Shearer said the city should also focus more on building up neighborhood associations, but Weatherby sees them as just another option.

"I don't see the city pushing neighborhood associations," he said. "It's something people have to want."

The Mayberry ideal is also being tested as the city tries to integrate a rapidly increasing minority population. The number of Fairview residents of Hispanic or Latino origin increased from about 4 percent in 1990 to about 16 percent in 2000, double the percent statewide and countywide. Fairview's non-white population shot up from 6 percent in 1990 to 24 percent in 2000.

The number of Russian-speaking residents, who are not counted in the census, also increased, as evidenced by the building of two large Slavic evangelical churches in the city (including one still under construction off Arata Road).

Patricia Martinez-Orozco, executive director of the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement and principal at Fairview Elementary School from 2001 to 2005, said the growth of the community she observed while she was principal required "a big social effort."

"Some parents said, 'Wait a minute, this (immigrant) population is taking away from our resources,' " Martinez-Orozco said. "It brought to the surface that maybe we are changing as a community. Some people welcomed it and others were a little frightened by it."

In addition, the vision of a quaint small town is being challenged by Fairview's poverty rate, the highest in Multnomah

County, according to most recent census statistics. And Fairview has one of the highest concentrations of affordable housing (based on income eligibility) operated by the Housing Authority of Portland, according to city officials: 328 units in the Fairview Oaks housing complex.

Though the city gets \$15,000 per year from HAP to help with increased costs of policing and other city services, Weatherby is asking HAP to increase the payments and make him part of the board.

"We need to integrate the people and we need more money to do it," he said.

Fairview Police Chief Ken Johnson said with rapid growth has come the police department's "inability to keep pace because of financial issues."

The department saw a more than 50 percent increase in all police calls from 1999 to 2006, but family and neighborhood issues (such as child abuse, sex crimes and burglaries) were especially on the rise with so many new residents, he said.

Johnson hopes he can eventually increase the number of officers who patrol the streets, including one detective, from 11 to 15, to continue answering all calls from residents (Fairview and Troutdale are the last two police departments in the county that answer all calls immediately). But with a tight city budget, he knows the increase may not come for a while.

But the mayor remains positive that his city can match the ideal of Mayberry, a "small, cozy little town where people bring up their kids, safe, with a sense of closeness, neighbor helping neighbor. That's what Fairview can be."

Gosia Wozniacka: 503-294-5936; gosiawozniacka@news.oregonian.com

Graphic - Map

---

**Edition:** Sunrise

**Section:** Metro East Neighbors

**Page:** 01 07

**Record Number:** MERLIN\_9411154

Copyright (c) 2007 Oregonian Publishing Co.