

Public Input Summary for Site Selection

Date: March 6, 2015

Multnomah County held two public open houses in early 2015 to receive public input about site selection for a new Multnomah County Central Courthouse (MCCH). The first open house was held on Thursday, January 29th from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. at the Multnomah Building. The second open house was held at the downtown Central Courthouse on February 5th from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Both meetings drew a combined 200 participants.

The purpose of the open houses was to share project details and receive information about public preferences (likes and dislikes) about both the Preferred Site (Hawthorne bridgehead) and the Alternate Site (parking lot next to KOIN Center). The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) will select a site this spring.

A comment form was provided at the open houses to solicit feedback from participants. In addition, the questions from the comment form were compiled into an online survey for feedback from the wider community. A summary of the questions and comments received from both the open houses and the online comment period follows. Copies of the original comment forms have been scanned and included in the Appendix. For additional information about specific comments received, contact Mike Pullen, Multnomah County Communications Office, 503-209-4111 or mike.j.pullen@multco.us.

Comments by the numbers:

- Number of comment forms from Jan. 29th open house: 9
- Number of comment forms from Feb. 5th open house: 66
- Number of responses from online survey: 388
- Total number of people participating (open house & survey): 588
- Total number of people that filled out a comment form or survey: 463
- Total number of comments received (by question): 1,628

Community interest in this highly visible project is strong. Comment forms continued to trickle in to Multnomah County staff well after the comment period for this phase of the project had ended. Proponents of the Veritable Quandary (VQ) restaurant, which is adjacent to the Hawthorne Bridgehead Preferred Site, have made their voices heard by attending BOCC public work sessions and hearings and providing batches of comment forms to County staff (for example, 20 of the 66 forms received at the Feb. 5th open house were delivered to the meeting on behalf of the VQ). These forms are summarized here along with the rest of the comments received. Any forms that arrived after the Feb. 23rd comment period ended were summarized separately by the County's Communications Office.

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

Five separate questions were asked within the comment form and this feedback was assessed per individual question/response.

1. *What do you like about the Preferred Site?*
2. *What don't you like about the Preferred Site?*
3. *What do you like about the Alternate Site?*
4. *What don't you like about the Alternate Site?*
5. *Do you have any other comments/concerns/suggestions?*

Each comment response was categorized into two main categories and coded by sub categories as depicted in the table below.

Support	Concern
General support for site location.	General concern with site location.
Aesthetic improvements	Aesthetic impacts
Traffic (conducive)	Traffic (impacts)
Access (better)	Access (worse)
Green space proximity	Green space impacts
Cost related elements	Cost related elements
Proximity to other people/places/things	Proximity to other people/places/things
Parking (better for)	Parking (impacts to)
Design elements	Design elements
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	Impacts to local businesses/buildings
Security (better)	Security (worse)
Miscellaneous/Other	Miscellaneous/Other

Many question responses were given multiple categories depending on the extent of the answer received, thus the reason that total category counts exceed the total number of responses.

What Did We Learn?

Most people understood that there are trade-offs associated with selecting one of the two sites. The Preferred Site had the highest number of supportive comments, while it also had the highest number of concerns. Generally, people feel the Preferred Site would be a good central location to nearby facilities and offers an attractive spot on the city skyline and waterfront. People recognize the value of it already being owned by the County. It is clear there are many concerns with the impacts to nearby businesses, especially those on the same block, and with potential traffic and parking impacts at this location.

The Alternate Site had positive feedback with regard to access, parking and making better use of the existing parking lot. Although there was not strong opposition to this site, there were some concerns about the location further from the Justice Center and Federal Courthouse, as well as the added project cost of purchasing the block.

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

There were also a number of neutral comments, generally questioning the process of narrowing to these two sites, wondering where the District Attorney’s office would be located, or questioning what will happen to the existing courthouse building when it is vacated. Some people feel that the existing courthouse block is the ideal location for the facility. The seismic vulnerability of the existing courthouse is also fairly well understood.

Comments by Question

Response findings per question are summarized below.

1.) What do you like about the *preferred site*? (421 responses)

The top three comments in favor of the Preferred Site were (in order) proximity to nearby places, convenient access, and facility siting/aesthetics. Comments in favor of the Preferred Site related to the highly visible bridgehead location adjacent to Waterfront Park and potential for prominent placement on the downtown skyline. This site was noted for its proximity to nearby facilities and services, including the Justice Center and Federal Courthouse. The fact that the site is already owned by Multnomah County was recognized as an important factor in the overall project budget. Access to the facility is seen as positive because of the location at the end of the Hawthorne Bridge. Cyclists commented on this aspect as well.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	43	General concern with site location.	73
Aesthetic improvements	99	Aesthetic impacts	11
Traffic (conducive)	4	Traffic (impacts)	5
Access (better)	102	Access (worse)	4
Green space proximity	11	Green space impacts	9
Cost related elements	76	Cost related elements	0
Proximity to other people/places/things	163	Proximity to other people/places/things	4
Parking (better for)	17	Parking (impacts to)	2
Design elements	7	Design elements	1
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	0	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	2
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	1
Miscellaneous/Other	8	Miscellaneous/Other	0
Total:	530	Total:	112

*Note: There were two neutral comments from this question.

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

2.) What *don't* you like about the *preferred* site? (390 responses)

The top three concerns about the Preferred Site were (in order) traffic, impacts to nearby businesses, and facility siting/aesthetics. Comments against the Preferred Site expressed concern with its location adjacent to busy SW Naito Parkway and the Hawthorne Bridgehead as well as the further distance from the downtown transit mall. Impacts to local businesses, in particular the VQ restaurant, were frequently mentioned as concerns. This site is seen as less desirable by some because of perceptions about increased traffic congestion and less available parking at this location.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	47	General concern with site location.	12
Aesthetic improvements	0	Aesthetic impacts	90
Traffic (conducive)	0	Traffic (impacts)	103
Access (better)	1	Access (worse)	50
Green space proximity	0	Green space impacts	39
Cost related elements	0	Cost related elements	10
Proximity to other people/places/things	0	Proximity to other people/places/things	53
Parking (better for)	0	Parking (impacts to)	60
Design elements	0	Design elements	70
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	0	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	97
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	9
Miscellaneous/Other	3	Miscellaneous/Other	5
Total:	51	Total:	598

*Note: There were six neutral comments from this question.

3.) What do you like about the *alternate* site? (374 responses)

The top three comments in favor of the Alternate Site were (in order) proximity to nearby places, better for traffic, and access. Comments in favor of the Alternate Site related to its proximity to nearby facilities and services, including available parking, ease of access from all four sides and less impactful to traffic. The site was seen by some as having less impact to existing businesses and buildings. It was also noted for turning an unattractive location into an amenity and adding to the urban fabric of this section of downtown.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	30	General concern with site location.	61
Aesthetic improvements	40	Aesthetic impacts	0
Traffic (conducive)	56	Traffic (impacts)	0
Access (better)	53	Access (worse)	1

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

Green space proximity	10	Green space impacts	0
Cost related elements	1	Cost related elements	0
Proximity to other people/places/things	94	Proximity to other people/places/things	4
Parking (better for)	31	Parking (impacts to)	0
Design elements	43	Design elements	0
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	22	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	0
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	1
Miscellaneous/Other	30	Miscellaneous/Other	1
Total:	410	Total:	68

*Note: There were 23 neutral comments from this question.

4.) What *don't* you like about the alternate site? (324 responses)

The top three concerns about the Alternate Site were (in order) proximity to other places, cost, and security. This site was recognized as being further away from the Justice Center and Federal Courthouse and having less visibility than the Preferred Site affords. The cost of acquiring this particular parcel of land was recognized as being less advantageous. Finally, having the courthouse sit atop a public parking garage raised security concerns for some people.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	46	General concern with site location.	15
Aesthetic improvements	1	Aesthetic impacts	20
Traffic (conductive)	0	Traffic (impacts)	22
Access (better)	8	Access (worse)	22
Green space proximity	0	Green space impacts	1
Cost related elements	0	Cost related elements	66
Proximity to other people/places/things	0	Proximity to other people/places/things	103
Parking (better for)	0	Parking (impacts to)	28
Design elements	21	Design elements	12
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	1	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	1
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	36
Miscellaneous/Other	6	Miscellaneous/Other	4
Total:	83	Total:	330

*Note: There were 12 neutral comments from this question.

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

5.) Do you have any other comments, concerns or suggestions? (199 responses)

Additional comments related to *preferred* site.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	10	General concern with site location.	2
Aesthetic improvements	2	Aesthetic impacts	7
Traffic (conducive)	1	Traffic (impacts)	3
Access (better)	2	Access (worse)	1
Green space proximity	2	Green space impacts	2
Cost related elements	3	Cost related elements	
Proximity to other people/places/things	4	Proximity to other people/places/things	5
Parking (better for)	0	Parking (impacts to)	2
Design elements	0	Design elements	3
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	0	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	10
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	4
Miscellaneous/Other	9	Miscellaneous/Other	10
Total:	33	Total:	49

Additional comments related to *alternate* site.

Support		Concern	
General support for site location.	1	General concern with site location.	0
Aesthetic improvements	0	Aesthetic impacts	0
Traffic (conducive)	0	Traffic (impacts)	0
Access (better)	0	Access (worse)	0
Green space proximity	0	Green space impacts	0
Cost related elements	0	Cost related elements	0
Proximity to other people/places/things	0	Proximity to other people/places/things	0
Parking (better for)	0	Parking (impacts to)	0
Design elements	0	Design elements	0
Less impacts to businesses/buildings (than other option)	2	Impacts to local businesses/buildings	0
Security (better)	0	Security (worse)	0
Miscellaneous/Other	3	Miscellaneous/Other	0
Total:	6	Total:	0

*Note: There were 137 neutral comments from question 5.

Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

Additional comments for both sites tended to repeat previous comments mentioned. Many people were entirely neutral about which site was the more desirable for a new courthouse facility and instead used this question as an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings without specificity to either site.

Neutral Comments:

Comments considered neutral were general and miscellaneous in nature, without preference of one site versus the other. The top themes that came from these neutral comments are listed below.

- Concern for where the Multnomah County District Attorney’s office will be re-located. There was strong concern for distance and proximity of the DA’s office to the new Courthouse location.
- Concern for available parking at/near chosen location.
- Concern for potential disruption of existing buildings and businesses, including historic building preservation.
- General recommendations and comments related to alternative locations to the two identified options.
- Comments about various design elements.
- General support for the overall project to relocate the Courthouse regardless of location chosen, including recognition of the seismic vulnerability of the existing MCCH.

Demographics:

Responding to the demographic questions was optional. Information from respondents is as follows:

Age:

18-25	26-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2	36	66	62	58	36

Gender:

Male	Female
162	147

Language:

English	Spanish	Russian	Vietnamese	Chinese	Other
314	1	-	-	-	3

Ethnicity:

African-American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Hispanic	Other	Unknown
4	4	8	273	6	6	2

The number of people that indicated they would like to be added to the mailing list: 192



Multnomah County New Central Courthouse

**Note: After the comment period had ended Multnomah County received seven additional comment forms from the Veritable Quandary restaurant on March 2nd, 2015. Top themes from these comments are as follows:*

- *General dislike and concern for the preferred site.*
 - *Compromises existing businesses.*
 - *Impacts to aesthetics.*
 - *Increased traffic congestion.*
 - *Lack of parking.*
- *General support for alternate site.*
 - *Less impact to existing businesses than preferred site.*