

EDITORIAL

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Problem-solving in Beaverton

By moving city government to the Round and upgrading the current site for police operations, the city can move forward on a fiscally prudent path

The city of Beaverton has an opportunity to solve at least two problems as it considers options for creating a suitable home for its police department.

The City Council, which is nearing a decision, has considered a variety of proposals involving four sites: the current Griffith Drive home of city government and primary public safety operations, a site near the Beaverton library, the former Westgate Theater site, and the former Coldwell Banker office building at the Round. The Coldwell Banker building would be used only for city services, not for police.

Group MacKenzie analyzed nine options involving these sites, but this should not be a complicated decision. City government should move to the building at the Round, which the city bought in April. The current Griffith Drive building, which needs to be upgraded to meet seismic safety standards, should be torn down and replaced with a new public safety building — a cheaper option than renovation.

The Griffith/Round combination, supported by Mayor Denny Doyle, would cost between \$42.3 million and \$47.3 million, according to MacKenzie. The next most affordable option, at \$48.7 million to \$53.9 million, is to build a new public safety building at the Westgate site and leave other operations in the current building.

Containing costs has to be the top priority, given the strain city and household budgets are under. But the Griffith/Round option also has the advantage of being the best one regardless of cost. It provides appropriate homes for city government and the police department while also improving the chances of making the Round a city asset instead of a liability.

The Round has been beaten into a black-and-blue eyesore by failed attempts to make it an urban oasis in the middle of suburban Beaverton. Since April, the city and Portland-based ScanlanKemperBard Cos. have charted a more practical approach.

"Our whole intent when we bought the property ... was to make the property look like it was finished," said Todd Gooding, president of SKB, a Portland real estate equity firm that bought



The former Coldwell Banker office building at the Round in Beaverton makes sense to house city government.

three buildings and adjacent property at the Round for \$13.25 million when the city made its purchase.

You can't get much more practical than that. In the short term, SKB plans to add parking and try to attract more quality restaurants to the site. The workers who would follow the city to the site would help that modest plan to work and reserve the hope for more ambitious improvements later.

If there's any other tempting option, it's to do nothing because of the price tag to taxpayers, who also could be asked to support some type of levy to help the Beaverton School District. But city leaders are not asking taxpayers to finance some monument to idealism like the proposed Sustainability Center in Portland — or some of the previous efforts at the Round, for that matter.

The police department, which has some functions at other sites, outgrew this home long ago. In fact, when the city moved to the building in 1986, it considered the site to be temporary. Today, the Griffith Drive operations, including municipal court, are more crowded than holding cells on New Year's Eve. And it's a basic civic responsibility to have a jail and emergency management offices located in a building that will survive an earthquake.

The city, which could seek a bond measure as soon as May, has little choice other than to create more space in the most cost-effective manner possible. It also should move forward with efforts at the Round and Westgate that could help those properties produce more revenue.

In fact, the strongest argument against moving the police to the Westgate property, co-owned with Metro, is that the land has more valuable uses. The site near the library never should have been considered. It includes a popular park and the site of the Beaverton Farmers Market, and already is one of the most vibrant areas in Beaverton. The area more likely would be harmed than helped by the arrival of police and city operations.

The timing could be better, but this looks like a necessary investment that should pay off in the long term through improved services and a more vibrant environment at the Round.