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Hundreds of area residents crowded into Kenmore City Hall on Tuesday to voice their thoughts about the proposed redevelopment of the Saint Edward State Park seminary building and accompanying land swap.

Before the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission hearing, state parks planner Michael Hankinson gave a presentation explaining the land exchange proposal.

A source of controversy in the community, the proposal is a land swap between State Parks and Daniels Real Estate, a Seattle-based development company.

Daniels Real Estate plans to acquire 9.77-acres of undeveloped woodland with 450 feet of shoreline adjacent to the state park, known as the McDonald property, and exchange it for 4.99-acres in the center of the park, which includes the seminary, pool and gymnasium building complex.

“Our goal is very simple, we want to save the building. But we also want to protect natural resources,” Hankinson said.

Kevin Daniels, president of Daniels Real Estate and trustee for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, presented what his firm hopes to do if the land and buildings are exchanged.

The company would spend \$40-50 million to repair the seminary, pool and gym buildings and repurpose them into a hotel and restaurant. Preliminary plans show that the firm intends to leave the building as untouched as possible.

“We’re a preservation based company,” he said.

After the presentations, nearly 100 area residents took to the stand and addressed the commission.

Those against the proposal expressed concern for the natural environment, and fears that the park’s tranquility would diminish.

Other speakers were concerned about what they see as being a slippery slope of losing public park land to private companies.

Anne Anderson sang the cautionary, anti-development words of Joni Mitchell into the microphone, “Don’t know what you got ‘til it’s gone, you pave paradise and put up a parking lot.”



Anderson thinks that Kenmore is catering to the developer with this proposed land exchange. She would like to see a plan which leaves a cornerstone of the seminary for an open air monument, an idea which has been advocated for by a grassroots citizens group called Citizens for Saint Edward State Park.

Heating and lighting the building currently costs the state around \$100,000 annually. Turning the seminary into an open-air monument would entail strategically demolishing large portions of the building, while preserving some iconic and functional portions.

Kenmore resident Janet Hayes said, “We cannot let private commerce and development destroy what is currently a safe, healing and educational experience.”

Concerns for wildlife in the 316-acre park were also on many people’s minds.

“Night lighting will shine onto hotel grounds, where once it was dark for animals to live in the park,” Sharon Baxton, a 30-year resident of the Kenmore area said. “Hotels are industrial. Parks, on the other hand, are for true respite from the intense industrialization.”

Those in favor of the land exchange proposal expressed a desire to see the seminary building preserved, confident that Daniels Real Estate is the best offer.

Dr. Eric Murray, President of Cascadia College and member of the Bothell Chamber of Commerce, said the economic value of the project would enhance the city of Kenmore and draw more attention to the beauty of the region.



Nancy Balin was the stepmother of Jaimeson Jones, who died of cancer at age 20 and often ran at Saint Edward.

“Jaimeson loved Saint Ed’s. He would not want to see the building fenced off with chain links so we could watch it crumble,” she said. “There is nothing that Mr. Daniels has said, nor that I have read, that indicate that we are going to lose anything in the park besides the building that is falling down.”

After the meeting, Daniels expressed a desire to save the building, even if the current proposal falls through.

Eileen Everett of Kenmore said, “In terms of retaining park and habitat, I believe that this particular land swap allows the retaining of more habitats as opposed to some other developer.”

After the meeting, Kevin Daniels commented that there was “fantastic attendance and fantastic passion from both sides.”

The seven-member Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission will listen to and read through the transcript of the meeting. There will be a vote by the commission in September to decide whether to move forward with Daniels’ proposal, where it must be approved unanimously.