

City may buy 'Made in Oregon' sign, change it to read 'Portland'

By [Mark Larabee, The Oregonian](#)

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The Oregonian Made in Oregon sign

A new deal in the works could turn the darkened "Made in Oregon" sign into a publicly owned attraction.

City Commissioner Randy Leonard wants the city to buy the icon. He's talking to the sign's owner, Darryl Paulsen of Ramsay Signs, and the owner of the building where it sits, developer Art DeMuro.

DeMuro said he has agreed to give the city the rights to his rooftop if Leonard can come to terms with Paulsen, who turned the sign's lights off last week to save the more than \$300 a month in electricity bills.

Not only does Leonard want to light up the sign again, he wants to change it from "Made In Oregon" to "Portland Oregon."

"Right now the sign is held in a commercial interest," Leonard said. "Made in Oregon is a copyrighted business. It could just as easily say Joe's Adult Bookstore."

Leonard said he's talked with both men and believes a deal can be worked out. He noted that the two already have contributed to the city: Paulsen gave the city a neon rose sign for the old McCall's restaurant in Waterfront Park (and Leonard picked Paulsen to receive a Spirit of Portland award this year for the effort). DeMuro chairs the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

Earlier this year, Paulsen was trying to lease the sign to the University of Oregon, which is leasing DeMuro's building. But after a spat with the city about changing the sign, the university let its option expire.

He was then negotiating with DeMuro on lease terms so he could find a new company to lease the

sign, but said DeMuro wanted too much money for his rooftop.

"It's kind of in limbo," Paulsen said.

DeMuro said he would prefer not to have "further commercialization of the sign."

Leonard hopes he can inject the city into the equation.

"If Darryl Paulsen and Art DeMuro don't come to terms on what a rental would be, Darryl has every right to remove the sign," Leonard said. "I believe most Portlanders would agree with me that this is not in the city's best interest."

Leonard said the sign is nationally and internationally known, helps people from across the globe identify Portland and brings economic value to the city in terms of tourist dollars. He said he hopes to buy the sign from Paulsen and, with the support of Mayor Sam Adams, is looking for city money to do it. He's not yet sure how much it will cost.

"These are great guys," Leonard said. "I expect us to come to an agreement."

-- [Mark Larabee](#)