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BOTTOM LINE: METRO OFFICE BUILDING

KATU TV CH 2

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5:15 PM

NEWSCASTER JULIE EMRY: Metro's 200 employees are said to be so cramped in their offices they're bulging at the seams, and the agency anticipates it's going to need even more space in the future. Tonight reporter Currin Snipes looks at the bottom line and what it's costing to build Metro's new home.

REPORTER CURRIN SNIPES: Everything you can sell and resuse, including bathroom fixtures, is being stripped from the bowels of the old Sears building. The aging eyesore will soon be the Metropolitan Service District's new headquarters, and Metro says it's practicing what it preaches: recycling.

JIM GODDARD, METRO: Well, the building itself...the building structure is going to be recycled. That's one of the biggest benefits of this project.

REPORTER: Officials of Metro, which oversees operation of the zoo, landfills and other regional government activities, say they need the new building because they've outgrown their current offices, which are leased for \$290,000 a year. The metamorphosis of the old Sears building is costing \$23 million, and is being financed through the sale of revenue bonds, but the architect says constructing a brand new building would cost several million dollars more.

Critics, however, charge the timing is poor, saying it looks bad for Metro to have such a big project when the rest of state and local government is struggling with the aftermath of ballot measure 5. The director of facilities admits it's an ambitious project, and says when completed the new Metro building will favor Nike shoe corporation's high tech campus, but he says that's what Metro councilors wanted when they approved the project last fall.

NEIL SALING, METRO FACILITIES COORDINATOR: And the council has always wanted to own their own building. That was a premise from the very beginning, and the question is not that we don't need it; the question was whether this is the time to do it.

REPORTER: Plans call for using recycled material during construction, which may or may not be cost effective. The architect called this a model project, something new and untried, and all agreed, good or bad, it's going to attract a lot of public interest. In Portland, Currin Snipes, Channel 2 News.

(more)

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NEWSCASTER: The architect says details on furniture and interior decoration of Metro's new headquarters are still being worked out, but officials say one advantage the new site will have over the old site is that there will be plenty of parking. If you have any interesting examples of how our government uses tax dollars, call the Channel 2 "Bottom Line" hotline. The number again, 231-4250.

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