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The best news for the city this week wasn't word that Bill McCormick won an invitation to dinner Wednesday at the White House, though the restaurant king's appointment to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities bodes well for Big Bill's beloved Portland Opera.

And it wasn't word that Eugen Bingham is opening a hot new restaurant today at 3200 S.E. Milwaukie, though the arrival of Sala bodes well for all those looking for a great place to eat before catching a show at the Aladdin Theater.

The best news for the city this week was word that Phil **Goff** just joined the Planning Bureau.

**Goff** is the visionary young urban architect who was behind the innovative proposal to take a temporary bike lane on the Morrison Bridge and turn it into a soaring esplanade, a flying park linking greenways on the east and west banks.

**Goff** is also one of the key players behind a movement called Riverfront for People. These are the folks who won't let die that wacky old notion that we should tear out the east-bank freeway.

Why won't they let it die?

Because it's such a great idea.

City Hall's ongoing River Renaissance study, coupled with the recent opening of the hugely popular Eastbank Esplanade, are fueling fresh looks at Portland's entire inner eastside. There are hot new ideas for all kinds of transportation options through the area, for higher densities of residential and commercial use, and for lots of new public space.

**Goff** is among those offering a dramatic reply to those insisting we can't afford to investigate these options.

We can't afford not to.

#### GETTING IN HIS LICKS

Talk about your tight squeeze. . . . When Portland ad man Jaime Leopold showed up in San Francisco the other night to play in the reunion gig for Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, he found no fewer than 15 guitarists crowding the stage. Says Leopold, "We got a standing ovation before we played a note."

A concert DVD is due in the spring.

#### GUY TALK

The busiest portal in Portland TV these days is the door marked EXIT. The latest to leave KATU is Frank Mungeam, a veteran of 15 years in the production trenches, most recently with "AM Northwest."

"After taking some time to enjoy the holidays," says Frank, "I'll be focusing on writing full time in the new year."

His first book, "A Guy's Guide to Pregnancy," sold more than 20,000 copies. On deck is the sequel: "A Guy's Guide to Fatherhood."

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