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Downtown Plan draws public criticism

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

Several community members criticized a plan to reopen Willamette Street to traffic between 10th and 11th Avenues at a public hearing in the City Council chambers Tuesday night.

That plan was one of several recommendations made by the Downtown Planning Commission that would greatly alter the face of the downtown area. The commission, which consists of nine businesspeople and other community members plus two non-voting members, heard public comments on the draft plan released last month.

Other recommendations of the commission include restoration of the Millrace east of High Street, a stairway up Skinner Butte at the end of Willamette Street, and pedestrian improvements along several downtown streets. The plan also proposes the establishment for a central plaza and open market area to combine public events with retail business operations.

According to the plan, opening Willamette Street to two-way traffic would "strengthen its image as Eugene's 'main street'" and enhance the entrance to the downtown mall. Wider sidewalks, pedestrian



Photo by Michael Clapp

A proposal to reopen Willamette Street between 10th and 11th avenues proved unpopular with citizens at a public hearing on the recommendations of the Downtown Planning Commission.

level lighting and tree plantings are also proposed for the street.

But no one spoke in support of that part of the plan, and opposition came from a number of sources, including the Lane Transit District and Lane Community College, which has a downtown center on that portion of the mall.

Opening the street would increase congestion on 10th Avenue, the central transfer area for LTD buses, said Janet Culver, president of the LTD board of directors. This would

create a safety hazard for those trying to catch a bus, she said.

It would also add to the time needed to transfer from one bus to another, and many people would miss their buses. This would increase rider frustration and cause a drop in ridership and revenues for the system, she said.

Adding traffic to the street would also increase the chance of collisions between buses and cars, and an accident on 10th Avenue could upset the schedule of the whole system,

she said.

"Buses and auto traffic do not mix in a downtown area," she said.

The LTD could only accept the plan if a centralized, off-street loading area were established for the buses, Culver said. But that change would be very expensive, she added.

The opening of Willamette Street was also criticized for aesthetic reasons. Jim Wilcox said the ambience of the mall was one of the things that con-

vinced him to move to Eugene several years ago.

"People are the city and not cars," he said.

But not all testimony was negative, and several people who disagreed with specific portions of the plan, praised the commission for their concern for the downtown and for their openness to public criticism.

Others offered their own suggestions for improvement of the downtown. A centralized location for a farmers' market would allow the market to operate more than one day a week and draw people to the downtown area, said John Graham, manager of the Lane County Farmer's Market.

Speaking for the Chamber of Commerce, Eugene attorney Michael Farthing pointed to the need to address the downtown parking situation. He said chamber members are split on whether to maintain the "free" parking system.

Farthing made no specific recommendations on parking, but said "The present system needs fixing."

One major goal of the plan is to attract new businesses to downtown. This could be accomplished by hiring an agent to market the downtown to prospective businesses, says Pat Decker, the city's senior planner.

Applications for state colleges, universities exceed expectations

By Alfred Gross
Of the Emerald

The number of applicants to Oregon's colleges and universities in general and the University in particular has increased compared to the same date last year.

As of May 25, there has been a 7.3 percent increase in applications to the University over those received last year at that time, according to Susan Weeks, coordinator of planning studies and services.

Application activity for all eight state institutions of higher learning is up nearly 5 percent over May 1983. "That is higher than we had anticipated, and if that trend continues we could expect to have more students in the fall than we had predicted in the winter," Weeks says.

"System-wide, usually about 70 percent of our total admitted students actually enroll," she adds.

However, "the May 25 is still early in the admissions cycle. Things are starting to firm up but are not as firm as they will be in July or August," Weeks says.

One of the surprises is the increase in nonresident freshman admissions, which counters earlier predictions. "The trend is for students, for economic reasons, to stay close to home. That doesn't appear to be what is happening," Weeks says. She attributes this to a faster economic

recovery rate in Washington and California than in Oregon.

One factor influencing what appears to be an increase statewide, however, might be greater efficiency of information processing at Portland State University, which has some new equipment.

The University processes its own applications, and freshman applicants constitute the bulk of these. They are "up almost 13.8 percent over last year's," says Jim Buch, director of admissions and records.

"This means a larger freshman class, and we hope it's a further indication that enrollment declines are behind us," Buch says.

Freshman applicants in each of the three categories — resident, non-resident and foreign — have increased over last year.

There is a larger proportion of non-resident freshman students at the University than at other state universities, Buch says.

"We put some extra effort into recruiting out-of-town students," he says. This was done through high school visits, direct mail contacts and the work of alumni.

Transfer and graduate student percentages are fluid but not significant, Buch says. "The trend that has been established in the last four months I expect to continue throughout the summer," he says.



Sculpture unveiled on campus

The University's School of Law unveiled a sculpture Tuesday of the late Wayne Morse, former U.S. senator from Oregon and University law school dean.

Stephen Haney, a master's degree student in fine arts, created the larger-than-life bronzed bust of Morse as a gift to the law school for its centennial.

The school's original Founders' Day was June 19, 1884, when the University Board of Regents approved a resolution to create a public law school for the state.

Haney began research for the sculpture last summer by using videotapes of The Morse Park Corp. donated two

framed statements by and about Morse to accompany the sculpture, and track lights and an oak pedestal were provided by the Physical Plant. The Cultural Forum donated the bronze for the bust as well as work space for Haney.

Morse to help develop his concept for the work, according to Sharon Gordon, assistant law dean. In February, Gordon and Nancy Morse-Campbell, Morse's daughter, gave their approval of the clay bust, which eventually would be bronzed and placed on the school's main floor.

Photo by Steve Crowell