

Planning commission votes to let in sun

By CAROL MORTON
Of the Emerald

Eugene architects and builders soon may have to let in sunshine for residential developments.

The Eugene City Planning Commission approved a proposal Monday calling for building arrangements that allow maximum solar access for south-facing walls.

The proposal, which would amend the city's building code

for planned-unit development and land divisions, will be sent to the City Council for consideration.

The solar access amendments are an attempt to fulfill the city council's top goal of energy conservation.

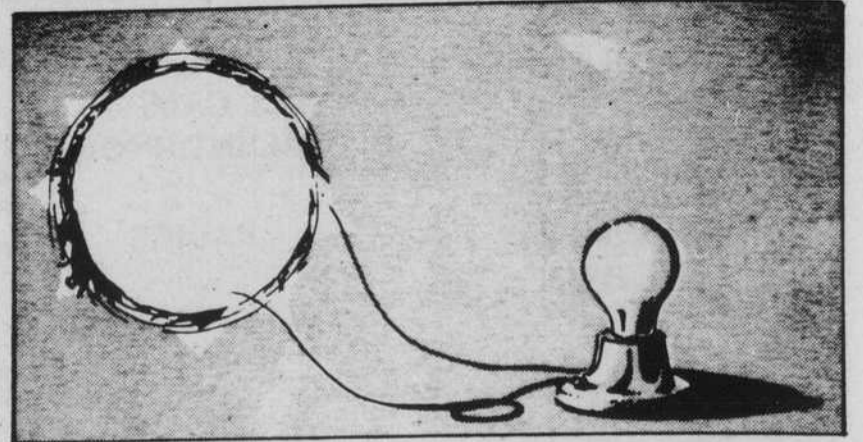
"Planners and designers will have to prove that they have seriously considered solar access" in the development application process, said city planner Gary Chenkin.

"It (the proposal) is designed to bring solar access to the level of consideration with other factors required by planned-unit development regulations."

Solar access is only one of many criteria the planners will consider when reviewing development applications.

But Planning Commission Pres. Adrienne Lannom is concerned that other planning issues will take priority over solar access.

"This proposal is so modest that it may be inconsequential," Lannom said. "I am hopeful that at some point in time it will be strengthened. We need somewhat more than what is offered but I will support it because it is



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a start."

Only commissioner Randy Thwing voted against the solar access amendments. Thwing said he objected only to the amendment's technical aspects such as the wording and the placement of individual clauses, not to the basic concept of solar access.

Opposition had been raised in earlier public hearings because of the prescriptive nature of

solar access requirements, said Gene Brockmeyer, president of the Southwestern Oregon Chapter of American Institute of Architects.

However, the group is not planning any further opposition to the proposal, Brockmeyer said.

Chenkin said the proposal is flexible and shouldn't create any unreasonable difficulties for developers.

"If there is important vegetation or if having solar access means cutting down a lot of trees, then the native trees will probably take priority," he said.

"It's not like we're forcing a lifestyle change in downtown Manhattan."

A non-technical solar efficiency manual is being written to inform designers and developers that solar access is a necessary, but not overriding, criterion in development proposals.

The manual will include specifics that were deleted during revisions of the solar access amendments, Chenkin said.



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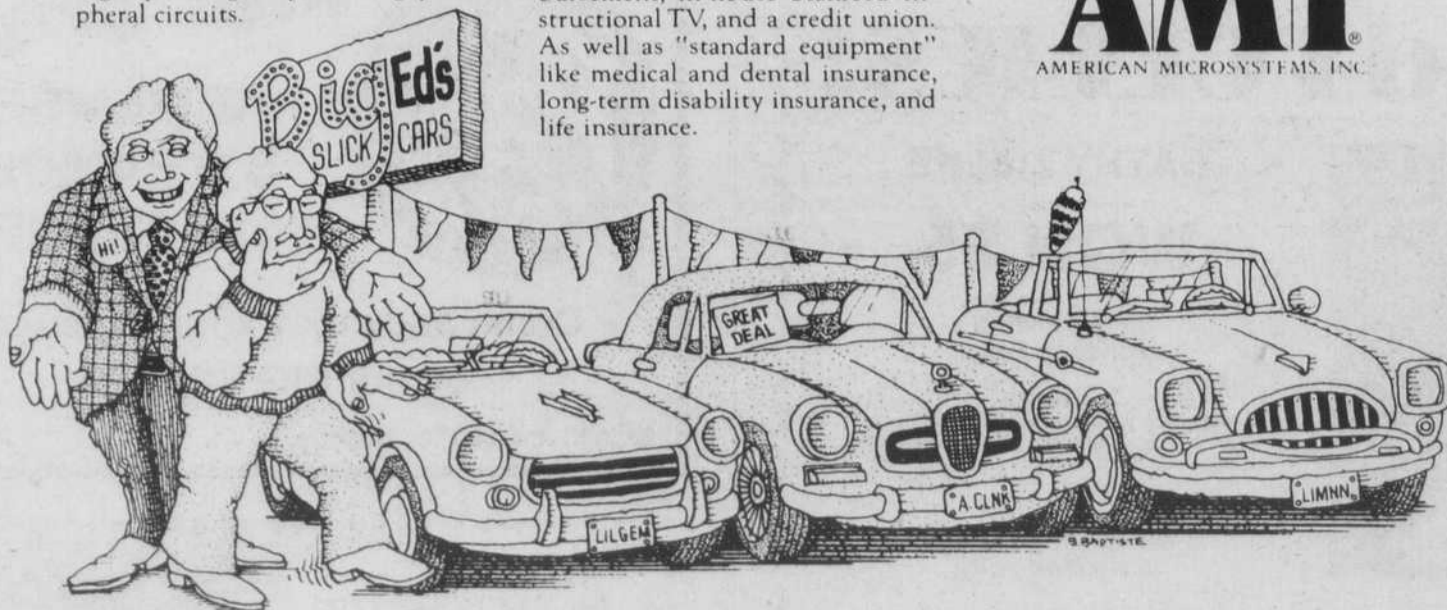
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