

# Obie sees bright future for Eugene downtown

By **Tod Fuller**  
Of the Emerald

Eugene Mayor Brian Obie made a brief appearance at a meeting of the Eugene Downtown Association Wednesday evening, speaking to a group of 60 downtown area

merchants and interested citizens about the economic prospects of Eugene's city center.

"Eugene's economy has started to move," Obie said. "This movement is caused by the construction that's going

on."

Obie pointed to a \$20 million Eugene Water and Electric Board project as well as the University's \$45 million Science Complex project as examples of construction currently under way. He also said the redesigning of the east Broadway area will begin soon.

Other projects the city of Eugene plans to undertake are the expansion of Mahlon Sweet Airport and construction of roads connecting the airport to downtown.

All of these projects will help Eugene's economy recover, something everyone in the area should work toward, Obie said.

Obie spoke of the downtown's brighter future, describing the expansions and remodeling some businesses have done and naming some of the 18 new businesses that have come to the area in the last year.

Besides operating their businesses, Obie told the merchants they had a job to do. The

vision of downtown's future is held too narrowly, Obie said.

"That vision is held in your (the merchants) minds," he said.

He explained that most of the people in Eugene don't understand the concept of downtown, what it means and why it's so important.

That vision has to be shared with the people in the community for it to come true.

"We held 52 hearings around this community," Obie explained. "People don't understand downtown, people don't understand why they should be supporting it, why they should be involved."

Obie also cited surveys that showed that the basic population doesn't have a good appreciation of what downtown is and why it needs support.

Obie then cited the community's lack of information about downtown as a problem.

"The city has spent \$17,000 so neighborhood groups can publish newsletters. So far there haven't been any articles about downtown in any of these newsletters," he said.

Obie told the merchants that they must share their vision of downtown's future with the community before that vision can become reality.

He closed his speech by rein-

forcing his commitment to the growth of downtown Eugene and the city's goal to make it a center of the community. He also made it clear that the merchants play a vital role in the city's planning for the area.

Ironically, Obie left the meeting after his brief but inspirational speech, to attend the unveiling of Valley River Center's latest remodeling. The mall, located just across the Willamette River from the downtown area, has been downtown's biggest competitor in terms of customers and new retail businesses.

The Downtown Association also took the opportunity to announce its plans for the Christmas decorations that will adorn the city center. On Nov. 28 the Festival of Lights will begin, featuring a variety of electric light displays throughout the downtown mall.

Illuminated trees, neon sculptures and floating banners will be framed by strings of lights on the skyline of buildings on the perimeter of the downtown area. The lights will be lit until 2 a.m. throughout the holidays to encourage people to come to the downtown area. The displays will remain until the end of January.

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## Et al.

### MEETINGS

**Druids Honor Society** meets tonight at 6 in 184 PLC.

**Informational meeting** for College of Business peer adviser applicants today at 4 p.m. in 337 Gilbert.

**PRSSA Chapter business meeting** today at 4:30 p.m. in 221 Allen. All members must attend.

**The River Front Design Advisory Committee** meets today at 3:30 p.m. in the Physical Plant Conference Room to discuss the Research Park Industry Location Survey conducted by PPP&M.

**Mortar Board** meets tonight at 6:30 in 108 Gilbert.

**Circle K** meets tonight at 7 in Century Room D, EMU. All are welcome to attend.

### MISCELLANEOUS

**Interested in an internship?** Come to an Internship Options

Workshop today 2 to 2:30 p.m. in 237 Hendricks Hall. Sponsored by the Career Planning and Placement Service.

**The EMU Cultural Forum and Kodak** are presenting "The Rock and Roll Time Tunnel", a movie using the latest in laser disc technology and giant screens to chronicle the history of rock-n-roll from its earliest roots in the 50s to the present. The 26-minute film will be shown at the EMU Dining Room tonight at 7, 8, 9, and 10 p.m. and is free of charge.

**Call to artists and craftspeople:** The EMU Craft Center and Cultural Forum will hold their annual Christmas Crafts Fair Dec. 10, 11, and 12 in Room 167 EMU. The sale is juried and the jury date is today. For more information and entry forms, contact the EMU Craft Center at 686-4361.



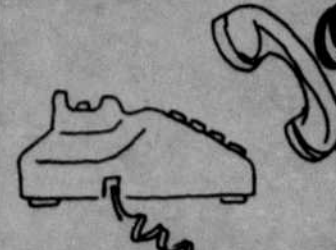
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