

# Eugene city planners look for room to grow

■ As downtown Eugene struggles, the city's outskirts are booming

By Rebecca Newell  
Oregon Daily Emerald

If Eugene were a Monopoly board, it would look like the game had just begun — houses and hotels in some places, other property still up for grabs and in need of development.

Despite problems with the redevelopment of downtown Eugene, other pockets of the city are growing rapidly. While the city concentrates on revitalizing the ailing Broadway neighborhood, portions of town such as the Ferry Street Bridge/Coburg Road area and Bethel are experiencing a boom

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Jim Torrey  
Eugene mayor

in residential and commercial development.

## Ferry Street Bridge/Coburg

In Coburg, the Oakway Center and the Willakenzie area have experienced steady growth in the past few years, accentuated by the recent private redevelopment near the Ferry Street Bridge, said Kurt Yeiter, senior city planner for Eugene.

“With the completion of the Ferry Street Bridge, [Coburg] is easier to access,” Mayor Jim Torrey said. “It's

close enough to downtown to access everything.”

The Coburg/Oakway intersection has been described as the second-busiest intersection in Eugene, with 60,000 cars a day traveling through it, said Steven Koth, project supervisor for McKay Investment Co., the company that developed and owns the Oakway Center.

“The city has demographically grown around the Ferry Street Bridge in the last five years,” Koth said.

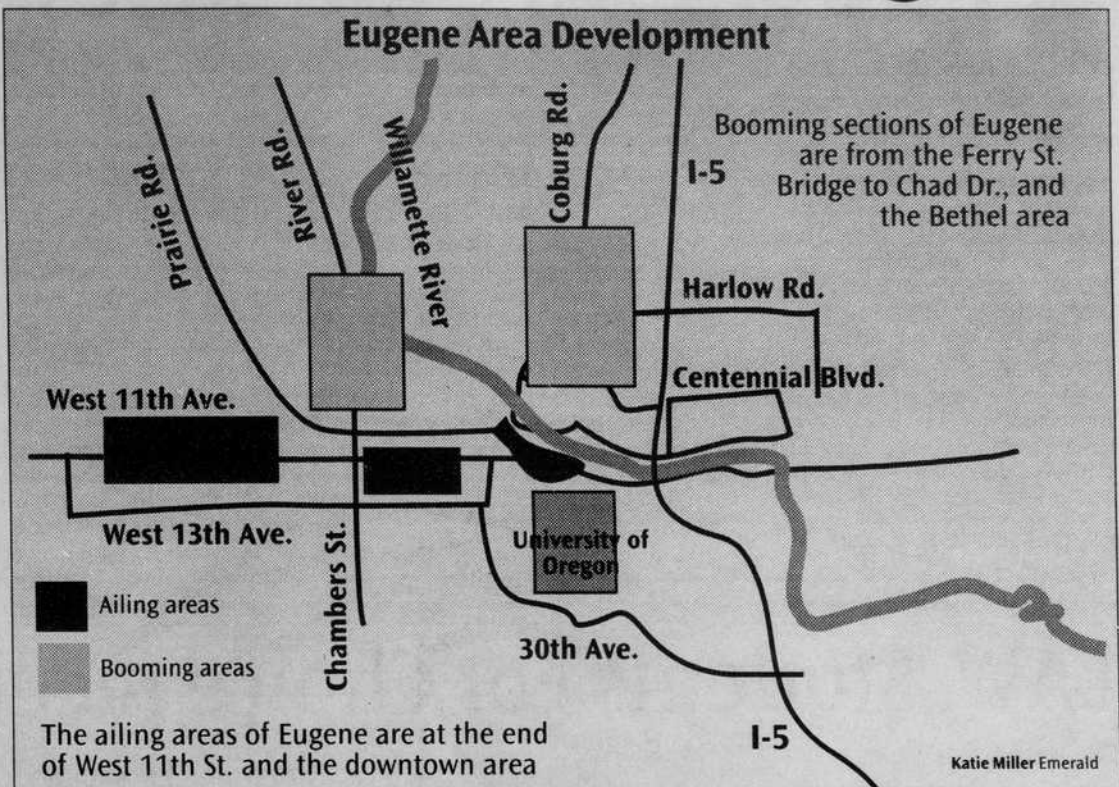
The affluence of the Oakway neighborhood is another draw, Koth said. According to a recent citywide census, within a one-mile radius of the Oakway Center, the average household income is \$73,896 — one of the highest-earning neighborhoods in Eugene.

“That says you have proximity to good clientele, as well as access to the heart of the city and Interstate-5,” Koth said. “The demographic, location and traffic are attractive to retailers.”

For the Oakway Center, that combination was used as the result of careful planning and execution.

“We started redeveloping in 1996, and have been continuing the process for the last four years,” Koth said. “Borders came in during 1998, Trader Joe's in 1998, Bed, Bath and Beyond in 2000, and just recently, Pier 1 Imports.”

In the last year, McMenamins opened in the former West Bank Restaurant Building, and its opening was followed by the arrival of two new hotels. One, the Residence Inn by Marriott, opened Jan. 15 and is en-



joying the convenience that nearby establishments offer to its clientele.

Marriott management chose the area for its proximity to the University, the downtown area, the river and the park, said Patrick McShane vice president of Exeter Hospitality Associates, the management company for Residence Inn by Marriott. “Other businesses welcomed us because we bring additional business to them,” McShane said. “If someone is staying here, they can run down to Borders or Starbucks. We're very pleased with where we're at.”

Farther north, development near Costco has attracted the interest of “big box retailers,” stores that serve as “anchors” for business parks, retail and restaurants, Torrey said.

“The north end of Coburg, Willakenzie, has seen a lot of residential growth,” Torrey said. “Homes are developing there because we have flat land that is easily serviced. Bethel is one of our major growth areas for the same reasons.”

## Downtown area

Despite the frequent growth on the outskirts of Eugene, it's the heart of the city that is struggling, Torrey said.

“As far as downtown, we need some of that growth [the outlying areas are experiencing],” he said. “In between the Hult Center, the LTD station and the 5th Street Public Market is a no man's land.”

Despite the popularity of events such as Art Walk and the Saturday Market, a large part of the problem for the struggling downtown is a lack of night life, Torrey said.

Add in the future loss of Symantec, and business during the day will also take a hit, he said.

“When the lights go out at 6 p.m., office people go home. We don't have the quality of night life in the core of our city we need,” Torrey said. “I want to bring the vitality back to the core of the city. We need to make downtown a destination.”

## Future growth

In order to “fill in the holes,” the city of Eugene is working on forming nodal development areas — small, high-density residential areas with some light commercial development — and having these serviced by transit, Koth said.

“The city created a master transportation system that has a suggestion for about 37 nodal development areas in Eugene,” he said. “We try to find room for the growth to go, rather than worrying about how fast we grow.”

Agripac is another plan on the city's agenda. The nine-acre piece of ground currently houses a cannery that is closing a year from now. The city of Eugene is buying the land and has big plans for the space, Torrey said.

“We want to split it in two; half for the potential federal courthouse, a \$70 million project, and half for residential and light commercial development,” he said.

## Calendar

Friday, Feb. 2

**Roundtable Discussion:** Karen Sprague, vice provost for undergraduate studies, discusses general education requirements. All faculty are invited. Noon-1 p.m. Room 159, PLC. Free.

**Creative Writing Reading:** First-year MFA fiction writers and poets read from their works. 7:30 p.m., Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall. Free.

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