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In a 2001 study of Portland-area development, ECONorthwest recommended higher SDCs as among the most effective ways to encourage nodal development. The consultants also suggested cities could restrict sprawl by not extending infrastructure to outlying areas until central nodes are fully developed.

Childs said if nodes work right, they will attract residents with livability and nearby services and attract businesses with high concentrations of customers. "The success is going to hinge on whether or not people view it as a place to invest."

• **Educate people.** "Even here on this [council] dais, there's real misunderstanding about what a node is," said Councilor Scott Meisner at a meeting. Meisner pointed to statements by some councilors indicating Oakway Center was a good nodal example.

"A destination mall is not nodal development," Meisner said. "We really do need to do some better education."

Many Willamette node businesses complained bitterly that the city had not done enough to reach out and talk to them about the node. The city could launch a major education effort to help business owners and citizens understand the reality and benefits of nodal development.

"It's not nearly as scary on the ground as people think," said planner Childs in an interview. "We're going to have to do a lot better job of explaining to people."

One big hurdle is the apparent widespread lack of trust in the Eugene planning department. Several businesses pointed to the debacle of the department's failed urban renewal efforts downtown including installing and then removing the downtown mall. More recently, the department faced harsh criticism from neighbors of the Broadway Place redevelopment who objected to the city clearcutting a grove of stately trees at the site.

But before the city educates people on exactly what nodal development is, it may need to decide for itself.

"There's a lot of misunderstanding around nodal development starting with the City Council itself," said Zako. That council uncertainty is creating fear and uncertainty in the community, he said. "That's really the root of the problem."

A widely distributed city pamphlet on nodal development shows a picture of Broadway Place on the front page. But Childs said such downtown density isn't in store for most of the nodes.

Childs said the city plans to hold two workshops next month to educate the public and developers on nodal development. Childs

said the city's efforts could benefit from a more descriptive, friendly term than node. "I've always hated it," she said. But with so many people now using the word, it's too late to change now.

• **Save space.** The city could require low density redevelopment in nodes to be built in such a way as not to preclude future infill density. Such "shadow platting" is tricky but if done right can allow for future infill to meet nodal requirements, according to ECONorthwest.

• **Just do green fields.** The city could give up on building nodes in already developed areas like Willamette and Walnut and stick to green fields. Councilor Nathanson suggested the city may want to examine less strict standards for the developed nodes.

But Zako of 1000 Friends said the city could lose important opportunities by only focusing on planning nodes in vacant fields. The lack of existing transit, housing, services and employment that a node needs to work make it less likely that all those things can be created simultaneously in a green field site, according to Zako. Developed areas like Willamette and Walnut already have a solid base of those elements to build on.

### Limp Nodes

Whatever the city decides to do, nodes will have to have teeth, according to Cortright. Eugene won't be able to weaken the nodal requirements too much and still meet the performance requirements in TransPlan, Cortright said. "We don't want things just called nodes," he said. "Clearly if you water down the requirements to a certain point, you're not meeting objectives."

If Eugene's nodes end up being nodes in name only, then the city will have wasted a lot of money on planning and incentives to no effect, Zako warns.

If Willamette Plaza is allowed to build a low density suburban-style shopping center in a node, it could get up to \$100,000 in a nodal SDC discount, for nothing.

But what a node should mean for Eugene, if anything, has left many still wondering.

"If it's watered down to the point it doesn't meet the goals, then what purpose is it serving?" asked councilor Kelly.

Mayor Torrey wondered about the Willamette node at a recent meeting. "If this can't be a duck even though we want it to look like a duck, why do we bother calling it a duck, or a nodal development," the mayor said. "I mean, are we playing games here?"

Does a limp node mean more than a bump on a toad?

CW