

DEMONIZING DEVELOPERS

As a local realtor with some semblance of social conscience, I appreciate very much EW's perspective on land use and city planning. I'm particularly concerned about the Eugene City Council's recent de-prioritization of the effort to establish a reasonable mechanism for renters to air grievances against landlords. Residents of the university area have identified the need to enforce codes related to health and safety issues. Our city government should acknowledge the importance of this effort and act to ensure that real estate investors are held accountable to building codes and requirements related to income properties. This will help our city, our residents, and our property owners by encouraging all landlords to establish and maintain safe and healthy conditions within their rental properties.

Regarding development of residential and commercial real estate, however, I find that EW's consistent demonization of developers and "speculators" ignores some basic economic principles. In fact, these principles may be playing out right now with negative results for our area residents. My team has represented builders in the acquisition of land for development. I can tell you that land suitable for affordable entry-level housing is becoming extremely scarce. This is resulting in fewer new housing starts and a focus by developers to move upscale with hillside development of homes far beyond the economic reach of the majority of Lane County residents. The lack of affordable new housing has already put upward pressure on the price of existing homes and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Against the backdrop of a slow economy, the double-digit percentage rise in local residential real estate values last year cannot be attributed to low interest rates alone — the factors of supply and demand must also be at work. Rather than the polarizing struggle against "sprawl" and "speculators," I would encourage a dialogue which acknowledges the reality of growth while insisting on livability and affordability for all Lane County residents.

*Rich Gaston
Eugene*

DEANIES FOR DENNIS

Now that Howard Dean has dropped out of the race, I want to encourage all of the "I really like Dennis but" people to show their support for the candidate who is most clearly speaking their truth. The fact that Dennis Kucinich can pull more than 5 percent in any state is absolutely amazing when you consider that (because of a virtual media blackout) most voters have no idea who he is or what he stands for, and he stands for quite a lot.

Dennis Kucinich is the only qualified (I don't think that Sharpton has the experience to be an effective president) progressive voice left in this election. If you're progressive and you want your voice to be heard, please support Kucinich. Maybe there is a threshold above which the media will have to admit that we exist.

If you haven't yet checked out the Kucinich website, www.kucinich.us, please do. Check out his positions on the things that matter to you. You'll probably be quite amazed, and you will start to understand why the corporate media have shunned him. It's obvious; he simply doesn't serve corporate interests.

*Thomas Rose
Cottage Grove*

TAYLOR DESERVES VOTE

Last year as a county commissioner, I had the pleasure of working alongside Eugene City Councilor Betty Taylor on a number of issues. I found Betty to be a wise and resourceful public servant.

We both served on the Human Services Commission at a time when declining revenue presented some very difficult choices. Betty took a leading role in insisting the commission should not eliminate programs that were urgently necessary to help destitute people in our community. Betty came up with ideas to reallocate the commission's budget in a way that maximized the value of our scarce resources.

Betty and I also served together on the McKenzie Watershed Council. This group brings together representatives of government agencies, the timber industry, and environmental organizations to craft consensual strategies that will protect the McKenzie River. I was impressed by Betty's ability to work with people of all perspectives, to keep an open mind, and to find common ground.

Betty is one of the most principled and ethically consistent people I've seen in public life. I think people admire Betty for her character, even if they don't necessarily support all of her votes.

I hope Betty wins re-election to the City Council in 2004.

*Tom Lininger
Eugene*

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