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## Rather than quote market statistics about how booming a business the market is doing or that how in one single year the farmers' market in Olympia, Wash., went from \$100,000 in sales to \$2.3 million by building a permanent structure for their market, I'd like you to Google *that* stuff yourself.

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ing lot for a permanent agricultural center and Farmers' Market in its place? Who to call? What to wear? Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson picked up the phone after two short rings.

"This is a topic near and dear to my heart," says Sorenson, a former employee of the Secretary of Agriculture during the Carter administration. "I'd say the most significant thing on the table was the Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts (DIVA) proposal. DIVA worked with the UO School of Architecture to have a series of designs drawn for a visual arts facility on the butterfly lot. I've previously worked with UO Landscape and Architecture on expanding the Farmers' Market, having that area (butterfly lot) leveled. The DIVA proposal is a more recent and researched proposal as far as where DIVA could have a strong downtown presence, and in some of the proposals, the Farmers' Market space is left as an open space on the south side of the lot, providing five times the space of the current market. In trying to pull these together, I'd like the county to work with both DIVA and the Farmers' Market."

You don't say?

"My proposal," continued Sorenson, "was that we build DIVA on the corner, and my modification was to get a tunnel under 7th so that people from the Hilton could have indoor access both in the heat of the summer and rain of the winter, and that the building itself would be an adjunct to the conference facility."

"There are obstacles," Sorenson continued. "One is the current facility. The butterfly lot is used by the Lane County Emergency Operations Center, our 911 operation, our 24-hour Sheriff's Office and people working across the street 24-hours a day, and we need them relatively close because of the hours they're moving in and out of the building. (But) there's a big lot bounded by 7th, 6th, Pearl and Oak, and there is a parking garage *under* that lot ... owned by the county. There's a tunnel under 7th that we use to get into the Lane County Courthouse. (Architect) Otto Poticha tells me you could add on at least one story on top of that building. The workers would have covered parking, it'd be safe, and it'd be even closer than it is now."

Can I get a witness? There's another lot that could replace the butterfly lot if DIVA and the Farmers' Market took over the space.

### Sorenson saga

Sorenson discussed more obstacles. "Another would be the commissioners that hold the land of Lane County in trust for the taxpayers; they have to be invested in this idea, and they're not all invested in this. They have to believe this is a good thing for the community, because the next step would be financing, issuing bonds, borrowing money to build or allowing others to build by leasing the land. I tend to think that the

government might get a more favorable rate on their loan (instead of the Farmers' Market borrowing). I think it would be a good idea to talk to them (the commissioners)."

Then, as if mulling the idea over to himself, Sorenson gave pros to match his own cons. "I wouldn't underestimate the component of the arts in this. It's not just because of the Bach Festival; look at the investments we have in the arts: You need a world-class event; you've got the Bach Festival; you need a regionally big event, where people come from other communities; you've got OFAM; the Cuthbert; the Hult Center; the Celebration; UO athletics sell out the Eugene Hilton; the Willamette Valley has some of the finest wines in the world. We are ready, absolutely. If we can pull together both our direct farmers in the form of the Farmers' Market, and the visual arts people, DIVA; pull those two together at that particular site and make it work for our taxpayers; if we could get slightly more than what we're getting now from a dilapidated structure, which we're going to have to displace at some point anyway, why don't we do something significant with the spot, and economically profit by making this investment rather than by leaving things as they are? This (butterfly lot) is already an eyesore that should be taken down."

Then Sorenson says, "I believe we *do* have an answer."

"I think," he finished "that DIVA and Farmers' Market should come together and work on a proposal that would be mutually agreed upon. If that would happen I know that would be much easier for me."

So Sorenson sewed a saga, pointing to Poticha.

### Parking Poticha

I wanted to know if the idea of moving the butterfly lot was feasible, and it turned out that Poticha was tied in far more than first realized. His secretary also answered the phone in two short rings.

"The courthouse is actually designed for *four* more floors," says Poticha. "Matter of fact, I'd like to see the floors on it some day. When we built it, the county didn't have the money or need to go higher. The foundation for that structure is a three-foot thick concrete slab that runs the whole block. It can hold up the world; four more floors, minimum. It was designed for seismic loading. If you want to talk about a building that's *not* designed for seismic loading, it's the butterfly parking lot. You consolidate all the county parking in one place; you put in an elevator to go down to the tunnel layer that's already connected to the courthouse."

I told Poticha the reasoning for my question: Moving DIVA and the Farmers' Market to the butterfly site.

"It was *my* (UO) class that did the designs," he pointed out. All the students incorporated the market. Frankly, from all of them, I'm guessing that at least 10 designs were certainly viable. One of the requirements for DIVA was an outdoor sculpture area. Wouldn't it be nice to incorporate the sculpture

area with the Farmers' Market?"

Yeah, I reply, that'd be nice. But could the Farmers' Market also get their agricultural center included, along with parking and accessibility?

"One of the problems the students had for DIVA," says Poticha, "was that the site was too large."

"So it would work?" I asked.

"You bet. Absolutely." Says Poticha. "If DIVA got involved, if there were a way to combine activities, that would be the ultimate choice. If you think about it, art and food; they're both to stimulate the senses in some way."

So lemme tell ya' I was pretty psyched at this point. I needed DIVA's reaction. It seemed all they needed was old-fashioned teamwork with the Farmers' Market. They couldn't have positioned things much better for initial talks on their future bower, I thought. However, some people just dig their own art.

### Digging DIVA

"Our long-term vision," says DIVA Executive Director Mary Unruh, is to have a visual arts center located in downtown Eugene, with artists studios, galleries and a permanent collection of regional art, together with the Lane County Historical Museum, because they have many similar needs."

"When Otto came to us," says Unruh, "it was with the idea that he and his students would design a visual arts center on the butterfly lot. That seems to be the place that comes up regularly where this might happen. There's a lot to do in the meantime. That's our 10-year idea."

Ten years? I thought. Who wants to wait 10 years? Whadya want instead, a new police station? Jesus.

*By our laws the land that should be held for the homeless has passed to a great extent into the hands of gigantic corporations.*

— H.E. HAYES, farmer and state lecturer in 1885, wrote to newspapers and farm journals on the West Coast.

"That's so Eugene," continued Unruh on the concept of furthering Poticha's students' designs for art and agriculture, "It has to include the Farmers' Market. As far as why it takes 10 years, well, look how long it took to get the library."

"Glen Svendsen (city facilities division manager) said they're putting a committee together to discuss use of the park blocks," says Unruh, "and that the committee would look at both long and short term uses of that piece of land, so that any short term decisions would not impact longer-term visions for that piece of property."

"Longer-term visions?" I asked.

"Like potentially a visual arts center," she smiled. "He asked me to participate in the committee."