

Land Bridge

Seeking concrete answers in an asphalt world.

An oxymoron, my dictionary reports, is "a combination of contradictory or incongruous words (as *cruel kindness*). If "sustainable growth" means "sustainable economic growth," I think it might be in the ring with "cruel kindness."

For 23 years, I've been watching a bigleaf maple grow in my back yard. First it overshadowed and killed the mountain ash that had red berries each fall. Then it grew over the lilacs. If they lean way out, the lilacs can still display a few fragrant flowers. We finally cut back a branch of the maple so the dogwood and its dusty pink flowers could eke out at least a stunted existence.

All of this bigleaf maple growth is finite, of course, because one bigleaf maple, like one human, can only grow so large. But bigleaf maples, like humans, like to reproduce. If the bigleaf maple were left to its own devices, little maples and associated plants and animals would gather around it, and my neighborhood would once again be a native forest in the floodplain of the McKenzie and Willamette. But some other land would have to grow the concord grapes, apples, pears, and peas I now grow and that food would have to be transported to me. We humans do inherently take up space and consume energy.

Tomorrow I leave for a two-day meeting of about 30 people in Southern California. We will be examining the "perfect storm" gathering over that region, and how that storm can (or can't) be addressed under my favorite environmental law, NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act).

The storm being examined has the less-than-best-seller title of "Regional Infrastructure Development for Goods Movement and Related Transportation Congestion in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area."

Translation: *Building more highways and railroad lines to transport the flood of global trade items that are being brought into the Port of Los Angeles at the same time that Southern California is experiencing record population growth and automobile congestion, and balancing this transportation construction and population growth with the environment.*

Condensed translation: *Building more highways and increasing Los Angeles population in balance with the environment.*

Really condensed translation: *Sustainable growth.*

At the moment, inland cities such as the City of Industry, Ontario, and San Bernardino are becoming choked with freeways, warehouses, traffic congestion and pollution as millions of containers of clothes, autos, computers, running shoes and such are brought to the Los Angeles Port, shipped to warehouses, and then shipped on highways throughout the U.S. to factories and malls and small, trendy stores. Things are also transported from Southern California to the eastern seaboard and Gulf Coast and then re-loaded onto ships, because the U.S., in transportation parlance, is a "land bridge" for transporting "goods" from Asia to other ports.

Meanwhile, the population of humans in Southern California (as well as their asthma) is soaring. The soaring population is driving around in more and more cars in already-congested truck traffic. (Remember Michelle Shocked singing, "I've driven 500 miles today and never even left L.A." in *Repo Man?*). This soaring population needs more and more houses, so where do you put the freeways? More airports are "needed" in L.A. to transport more and more things and humans. And (asked in a tiny voice), where do you put the meadowlarks (who are plummeting because they require open space), and chaparral, and coastal sage scrub, and sugar pines (which are dying from vehicle pollution)? Where do you put clean air? Where do you put children losing childhood to asthma? Where do you put silence?

So when you next hear the phrase "sustainable [economic] growth," it might be worthwhile to seek concrete answers to questions such as, "What growth? Sustainable of *what?*?"

But be forewarned. This topic can bring out the Bolton in some people. Recently I was at a dinner with a retired oil corporation lawyer. He was complaining about occasional power outages in his small town. I mildly remarked that we have become addicted to running numerous energy appliances simultaneously in our homes. "Do you think people want to go back to walking with pieces of glass in their shoes?" he shot at me.

We don't yet know how to talk together about consequences of, or alternatives to, endless growth.



'Do you think people want to go back to walking with pieces of glass in their shoes?' he shot at me.



Elect **Aria Seligmann**
4J School Board Position 6

Endorsed by: Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson, Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, David Piercy, City Councilor Bonnie Bettman, City Councilor Andrea Ortiz

- Equity in Education • Healthy Food in School
 - Diversity and Tolerance
- Leadership with Heart*

VOTE! DEADLINE MAY 17!

FLOWERS • MEATS • STARTS • EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY FOR FARMERS • JAM • HONEY • BREADS

PRODUCE • 25 YEARS • NURSERY • JAMS

COME ON DOWNTOWN NOW TWICE A WEEK TO FIND THE BEST LOCAL PRODUCE, PLANTS, FLOWERS, FOOD & FUN!

TUESDAY FARMERS MARKET

OPEN 10-3

Spring Garden Specials
Great Local Produce
Knowledgeable Growers

SATURDAYS 9-4 APR - NOV, PARK BLOCKS
TUESDAYS 10-3 MAY - OCT, PARK BLOCKS
THURSDAYS 2-7 JUNE - SEPT, FAIRGROUNDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR PRODUCT AVAILABILITY, CALL (541) 431-4923

PLANTS • VEGGIES • WWW.LANECOUNTYFARMERSMARKET.COM • FRUIT • STARTS

Inspired Gifts for Mom

MOTHERS DAY GIFT GIVING INSPIRATION COMES EASY AT 5TH STREET MARKET SHOPS BLOOMING WITH BEAUTIFUL THINGS.

Public 5th Street Market

beauty fashion home dining gifts

Come to your Senses 5thstreetmarket.com 541.484.0383