

Park Central

A bait and switch plan

You know those little puzzles, where you move a number to the side to maneuver another into the place you want it to go?

Well, that's exactly the strategy needed to achieve the downtown central park, central public plaza, central market square that we've long been waiting for. This isn't a new idea. It's been in our Downtown Plan for years. It calls for a central gathering space downtown — our own version of Pioneer Courthouse Square. It calls out for a place to better accommodate our Farmers Market and Saturday Market and our own Festival of Flowers. We all know that Eugene needs a center to, well, center our celebrations of who we are together.

So what has to be moved and where? I'll give you a hint. It has to do with removing a species of butterfly, made out of concrete, that is not an endangered species but ought to be. I'm of course referring to the "Butterfly Parking Lot" that now occupies most of our North Park Block.

So where would we move or replace this needed and convenient parking?

Those who have been following the Whole Foods/ parking garage controversy recently learned about the lost secret of the county parking garage on 6th between Oak and Pearl.

It looks like just a surface lot, but it actually has one additional level underground that is connected back to the County Public Service Building. Everyone had somehow forgotten that the garage foundations were built to allow for four more floors of structured parking. That's right. It is already structurally prepared for vertical expansion, which greatly reduces construction costs.

This serendipity comes from having had to cope with the ubiquitous high water table downtown when the garage was built. A three-foot thick concrete slab was required across the entire site in order to keep underground water pressure from pushing the garage up and out of the ground, according to architect Otto Poticha.

What kept the garage down is now just what is required to hold the new floors up. Earthquake forces for a new addition are easily handled in the construction of required new stairwells and elevator shafts.

Moreover, the garage is also appropriately located on what is already a car dominated street, not one where a parking structure is going to interrupt our aspirations for a "great street" pedestrian march toward the river.

Bait & switch

So, the bait is recovering our North Park Block, seizing the opportunity to remove the "ing" from parking, so to speak. The lure is the opportunity to create a new central square and perhaps some special shelters for our markets. The hope is for our own festival, market, civic place and the return of the North Park Block to vital public use.

The switch is to consolidate county and other parking in the place where it can be done with some economy and minimal urban impact, freeing us up to finally accomplish a long sought-after downtown goal.

Bait and switch is of course a confidence game. What we need are some bright people in city and county government with sharp cooperating pencils and enough confidence to seize this special opportunity.

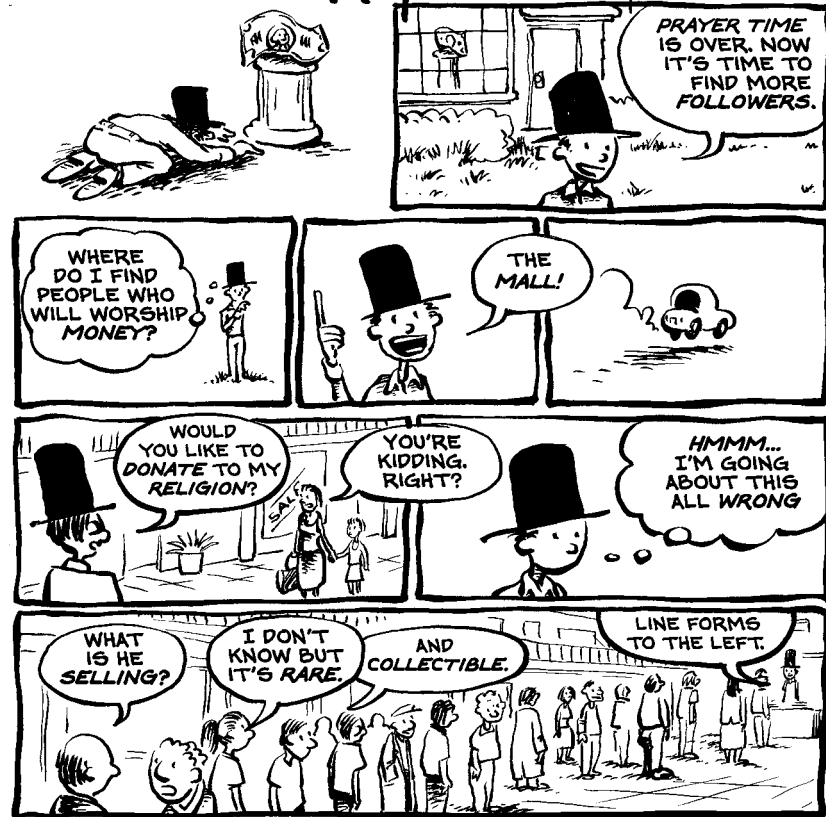
See: You just move this one piece over there and the one you want falls right into place.

Jerry Diethelm is a UO professor emeritus of landscape architecture; and a Eugene architect, landscape architect and planning and urban design consultant.



How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ECO-CONTROL

Alan Pittman's story, "Who Are the Real Terrorists?" (3/9) informed your readers what many have observed for some time: Greens have become the new Reds. Government is captive to Green-baiting demagogues and ideologues who deny intrinsic value of other species and deeply discount future generations. Those who do not subscribe to the dominant paradigm of short-sighted greed are marginalized and vilified, just as were those who fought for social justice and civil rights 50 years ago. Protests are symptoms of government ineffectiveness and disenfranchisement of an entire constituency.

The article shows the roots of environmental activists' disillusionment with elected officials reach back before the 2000 election, and the backlash began before Sept. 11, 2001. Pittman glosses over the Clinton administration's role in both spawning environmental protests and creating the apparatus used to repress protesters. His article fails to explain the motivations of protesters betrayed by an administration that took them for granted. Fueled by optimism in the early '90s, many in the environmental movement had their expectations dashed by political expediency. Although the Clinton administration's efforts against environmental activists paled by comparison to the current one, it would be naïve to believe that all will be well if the party in power changes.

While not all environmentalists practice tactics described in the article, we all suffer from the repression of those denied their right to political expression. Those who care for the Earth would do well to remember Ben Franklin's advice to hang together.

Brian Baker
Eugene

SAFETY BOXCARS

I went to the "Take Back Our America" rally in Eugene Saturday. The Bush cabal need not worry about this group. This bubble blowing, peace flag waving crowd was willing to be penned in like cattle behind "safety barricades" while bicycle short wearing "peace officers" kept them from crossing the street in the crosswalks.

A word of advice to those planning on attending "Take Back Our America" rallies 2007-2028: Remember, the first step is to take back your protest area before the "peace officers" load you into the "safety boxcars" bound for "safety camp."

Michael T. Hinojosa
Drain

SENSELESS

The Eugene City Council nixed Sacred Heart's move to Crescent and Coburg Road because a hospital at that location would generate too much traffic. Now the council favors McKenzie-Willamette/Triad's relocation to North Delta Highway, a growing neighborhood that already suffers from just as much traffic, if not more, than Coburg and Crescent. Where is the sense in that?

Jean Rubel
Eugene

REGISTER BIAS

Recently, I read a letter in *The Register-Guard* about a lesbian couple who had a baby and the *Guard* refused to list them both as parents because their policy was to list only the biological parents in the birth announcements. This is truly unbelievable to me.

With this action the *Guard* takes a blatant stand of rights denial. They refuse to change their policy with the times. They have, in essence, said that they do not support equal



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