

Great Street Charts

Eyeballing the corridors that connect.

I got them at my favorite store over in the planning tools section, you know, the area behind city plumbing. All right! I thought. First visions, then policy plans and then planning tools. I've loved good tools ever since I discovered that it was difficult to do finish carpentry with a hatchet.

I bought the whole set. It included great street charts for Broadway, 8th Avenue and Willamette all the way to 18th. 5th Avenue, too, and then with surprising foresight, 11th and 13th, which together with Franklin/Broadway/Mill Street – it's not just in London that streets change their name every few blocks – are the major connecting corridors between downtown and the 20,000-plus students and faculty at the UO.

I decided to check out the chart for 5th Avenue, since we now have a good test. Yes, Hugh Pritchard was right. The federal courthouse wouldn't have fit. Out of scale. Much too big. We know, now that we can experience the actual building, that it would have been a poor urban neighbor in the 5th Street Public Market, Station Square, Electric Station environment. It would have been an amalgamated elephant in the garden and bull in the pottery barn lump crammed into a fine-grained historic street.

The chart showed 5th reaching to the river. Good, I thought. Sixth and 7th are cut off by the railroad and now the new courthouse, but 5th, since it is already across the tracks, has the potential to connect the market area to our downtown riverfront. This becomes an important connector when EWEB's move at last blasts the key-log out of our return to the river.

So, I was getting the idea. The role of these charts was to more graphically portray our civic aspirations, to give us a "road map" to greatness in the critical corridors of our downtown experience. But road map sounds a bit too Middle Eastern, too arid of imagery. These were definitely Northwestern, fully illustrated, three-dimensional, vividly recorded diagrams of urban relationships and qualities in key places, such as the Mill Street entrance to downtown, the 8th Avenue-follow-the-Millrace-past-Cannery Square return to the river, and the 8th Avenue-Skinner Market Square conversion of the North Parking Block. These charts set out the kind of urban design hopes that enable the emergence of great streets.

I remember back in the late '70s when we were in the midst of building the Hult and the Hotel-Conference Center and had no Great Street Charts or any inkling of the need for such planning tools. Gerry McDonnell, who was supervising the construction, brought a Hult Center site plan to my office in the newly restored Smeed Hotel so I could overlay it with a Hotel-Conference Center plan on my light table. I wanted to see what was in store for Willamette, an edge that both projects had in common.

It was worse than I'd expected. Willamette was just a leftover, the outer limit of each project, neither of which had much to do with one another.

There was no Willamette between 6th and 7th, no butte-to-butte iconic corridor or continuity through our town. A row of fir trees was to be planted along 7th to reinforce the edge of the two-block island complex and would have effectively blocked the downtown view to Skinner Butte. Afterward, there was of course some characteristic Eugenean discussion of the problem and some institutional scrambling resulting in the civically challenged street you see today.

The idea of the Great Streets Charts is to prevent more leftovers, because leftovers aren't even pretty good streets.

The idea is to have something positive to put on the table when gentlemen and gentlewomen developers come to call. Something more than a few lines on a map and a few very general policy statements. A representation of city design interests that says we'll invest in your project if you'll invest in ours and here are some of the things the city of Eugene would like to accomplish in and around your project area. You want a parking garage? We want to make Mill Street the entrance foyer to downtown, not just some leftover car zone. We want the 8th Avenue entrance from Mill to be special and relate to what happens on the courthouse side, and since you own both sides, maybe we could find a way to have the two projects talk to each other and bridge across.

Imagine how useful these charts will be as we try to evaluate potential places for a City Hall – how they might help us create vital pedestrian passages, avoid dead zones, make sure we mix civic art and activities, and create the variety of kinds of urban open space along our streets that add up to a great downtown.

You want a set of these charts? Better head for Jerry's.

Jerry Diethelm is a Eugene architect, landscape architect and planning and urban design consultant.



Federal Reserve sham and into the sinister and horrifying world of the USA PATRIOT Act (mandatory injections of untested vaccines and mandatory microchip implants AND a national ID card for every citizen by May 2008) and the appalling list of executive orders (our bumbling figurehead of a president may declare martial law at any moment).

I attended the screening along with most of my friends, and we were collectively shell-shocked and outraged. Personally, I felt like letting out the ultimate primal scream. Inarguably, this is the most shattering film of its kind ever made in this country. It is thoroughly and impeccably researched, and was financed out-of-pocket by Mr. Russo himself who spent two years of his life producing it. It will be showing locally at the Bijou in August.

You may see a trailer for the film at freedomtofascism.com

Rob Simonson
Eugene

SOLUTIONS MISSING

I must admit I was impressed by Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, which did a pretty good job of summarizing, in a comprehensive and compelling manner, the seriousness of the climate crisis and what it means for life on Earth.

I thought Gore's most effective tactic was debunking such myths as "global warming is just a cyclical trend," by presenting data that proves how the current levels of CO2 and corresponding air temperature are far greater than have ever occurred before, during past natural cycles.

Something sorely missing from the film, however, were some honest solutions. For instance, one of the paltry "solutions" Gore suggests is to "plant more trees," with nary a mention to the 214,000 acres of forests worldwide that fall to the chainsaw every day. One of the



Al Gore (right) and the Earth

vital roles of our forests is the retention of CO2, the main cause of global warming. Massive deforestation of our planet is exacerbating climate change. Therefore, one of our first solutions to the climate crisis should consist of a serious re-examination of the timber industry and its century long free-for-all plunder of our nation's heritage forests.

Josh Schlossberg
Eugene

GROUP SCREAM ANYONE?

I found Hugh Massingell's letter ("Search for Meaning", 7/20) strangely comforting. With mass media telling us to buy, go faster, do more and things will only get better and alternative voices telling us to practice peace, abundance and love, it felt good to know there is someone else out there with their eyes open who just feels like screaming.

Call me pessimistic, but I don't see things getting any better — not as long as we all try to make ourselves feel good despite national circumstances. Maybe feeling some group psychic pain might be the medicine this country needs to wake up and mend a few things.

Group scream, anyone?

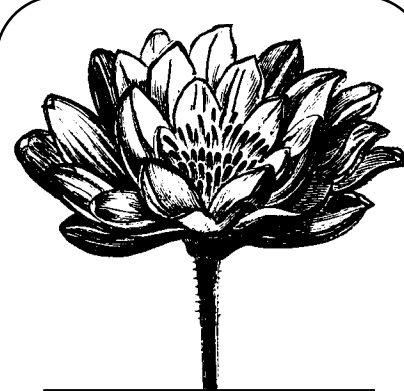
Katy Doones
Eugene

DARE TO SHARE

CNN is running a "documentary" on the evils of Kim Jong and the oppressed one party state of North Korea. I don't believe we are really interested in human rights violations in North Korea, Iraq, or anywhere else. If that were true, we would be protecting the women and children from the violent sexual homicide that is happening in Sudan and Darfur.

Our government's interest is: weapons, oil, power and money. No one is allowed to have more WOP and M than we have.

This is an election year. Let's vote for representation that will shift this obscene focus. Let the only rousing debate on the



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