

over the years owe part of their development to the open jam scene and in particular to Rooster, Byron or Skip?

I do.

I'd like to invite everybody to join me in supporting the open jams and in thanking these special individuals for their efforts. Together, we're gonna keep jazz and blues alive here in Eugene whether absentee club owners like it or not.

*Brien McMullen
Conjugal Visitors
Eugene*

TROOPER ALERT

To Gov. Kulongoski: Where are the 150 state troopers you promised to deploy right after the election? I drive between Salem and Eugene on I-5, and in the last 10 trips, I only once saw a state trooper. On Hwy. 99, there are no troopers, but I once saw one Polk County sheriff at a major wreck.

Oh, then there was the Polk County sheriff who ignored the five tailgaters travelling at a high rate of speed with their high beams on coming towards me, and instead took off after me because I was going under the speed limit through an intersection (facing the high beams). I believe he thought I was drinking. I was coming from a dry town (Monmouth), whereas the speeders were travelling towards Monmouth after spending the evening in the bars in Corvallis. Makes sense to chase the sober driver, don't you think? Less trouble that way.

Anyway, I'd sure appreciate the state troopers. I'm tired of rushing up the freeway at 75 mph with tractor-trailer rigs breathing down my neck and passing me on the right (and going over the center line). I get much better gas mileage at 65, thank you very much.

*Ann Tattersall
Eugene*

viewpoint BY GREG BRYANT

A Downtown Option

Proposing a collection for a more vibrant Eugene



Everyone wants a downtown filled with life. The existing downtown tenants – let's call them "downtowners" – want vibrancy, more than anyone. Hundreds of them make sacrifices and work very hard, every day, to try to make downtown work.

In the buildings the city has recently optioned, and threatens to destroy, are volunteers at DIVA; artists at New Zone; organizers of the Farmers' Market and Saturday Market; musicians at the Jazz Station; teachers at the Network Charter School and MECCA; event managers at John Henry's; social dancers at the Tango Center – and many others.

And yet, the city would like to remove them from downtown. Unlikely as it seems, the city dreams of replacing them with hypothetical upscale residents and imagined national retailers. The city has pursued this unpleasant strategy for many years, and, on its own terms, it has had little success. This is because the city's strategy doesn't start with *people*.

City planning is a human rights issue and always has been. When the City of Eugene plans to destroy buildings, it makes the lives of downtowners very difficult. The effect is like a bomb threat – after all, there are already craters downtown. The city makes it impossible for these local businesses and non-profits to plan for the future. The city threatens to provide more failed projects, make downtown uninhabitable for years and destroy the work of the current generation of downtowners.

Destroying buildings is expensive, and new construction drives up the cost of rental property. This worsens the problem of filling space. And it's wasteful – all the existing buildings are in either good condition or can be restored.

So, instead of tearing down, let's try something more constructive. People want the empty spaces downtown *filled*. Who can organize this? A collective of downtowners. We could organize the downtown tenants, and put them in charge of keeping downtown filled, and vibrant. They know how to do it.

The city could buy and preserve the buildings, protect the tenants, provide them funding and allow them to permanently program this new city space for the public good. The collective would invite local organizations and businesses, of all sizes, to fill the voids. It would create a critical mass of activity downtown. It would subsidize Eugeneans *committed* to downtown, rather than developers and banks interested in *profiting* from downtown.

Right now, no developers are convinced they can profit from downtown, but plenty of locals would like a chance to move into the existing spaces. Especially if there was an exciting, empowering, secure, city-funded initiative to do so. For developers, there's plenty of existing open land for new housing downtown – several holes and parking lots come to mind.

Together, we can get this process rolling. The city currently has no other viable options.

If you would like to start an activity downtown, or move an existing activity there, register to help the collective proposal at www.downtowneugene.org

Greg Bryant is a community nonprofit organizer, computer programmer and tango addict. He moved to Eugene in 1973.



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