

Intelligent Design

UO students share their theory of downtown resuscitation

KGW and Beam Developments both won bids to redevelop downtown and now must build an efficient relationship with the greater community of Eugene in order to craft the best possible plan to rehabilitate downtown Eugene.

The task ahead of the city will certainly not be easy. Nearly every neighborhood already draws the attention of its residents away from downtown; this is going to be a difficult trend to reverse. We have some ideas before any further steps are taken.

Mix and match. If everything is the sum of its parts, the designers must be keenly aware of the specific parts that make a city a city and make Eugene Eugene. It should be a unified community in its own right. Mixed-use buildings that combine residential, commercial and leisure spaces will help the new downtown community succeed. The city of Eugene should demand that the developers utilize sustainable building and smart growth practices. The combination of businesses on the ground level and housing, for all levels of income, on the story above would go a long way in helping establish a community. With these design tactics, residents might be more likely to patronize the new downtown business because they're living right above them.

An all day affair. Ideally a downtown should have enough homes, business, and recreational activities to draw people in during the morning and keep them coming 'til last call. Without a lively social scene, the only people who use downtown are street kids, who only contribute to the same unwelcoming atmosphere we have now. This downtown should be awake from 9 am to 2 am.

Support your local boutique – and more. We think it is important to support local business such as Rennie's and Sundance, but we also see the need for something else. Throwing a Borders or Jamba Juice in the mix won't kill anyone and would probably bring bigger crowds than people would like to admit, but just remember to keep the local guys in mind.

Step by step. Hoofing it from place to place should be measured in feet, not blocks. It's nice to get shopping, dinner, a show and a drink within a few blocks. Think small. Compress. The new design shouldn't make it necessary to drive rather than walk from one destination to another in downtown Eugene.

Everybody in the living room. Downtowns need a living room, a place to hang out and socialize, something better than waiting for your transfer at the bus station and something bigger or more comfortable than the corner of Willamette and Broadway. Greenery in the form of a park block or green roofs would go well in this town.

If you cook it, they will come. Why not a kitchen to go with the living room? Give us dives, diners, greasy spoons serving breakfast all day, pizzerias, smoothie bars, ice cream parlors, burger joints, steak houses and fancy delicatessens, and the streets will be congested like the right ventricle of Colonel Sanders himself.

Happy hour power. When it comes to spending, drunken sailors have nothing on a freshly turned 21-year-old student. On the corners of Broadway and Olive, a robust and lively pub district is screaming to be built. Saturate this area with pubs and venues galore, and maybe cut off auto traffic at night we can all stumble to our next destination in relative safety.

Movie + beer + pizza = hole in my pocket. We've heard talk about putting a multiplex theater downtown. Eugene already has some 44 commercial screens within a seven-mile radius. Do something we haven't seen yet, please! Perhaps the McMenamins brothers could get in on the action and give Eugene its own Bagdad Theater. A smaller restaurant/movie theater combination can do the same jobs as the Bijou and the megaplexes on a way smaller scale.

Pulling off a balancing act between maintaining the Eugene aesthetic while trying to inject new life into the heart of town is hardly an enviable job – but you've been begging for this job, KGW and Beam. Now it's your turn to show Eugene what you're made of. Good luck!

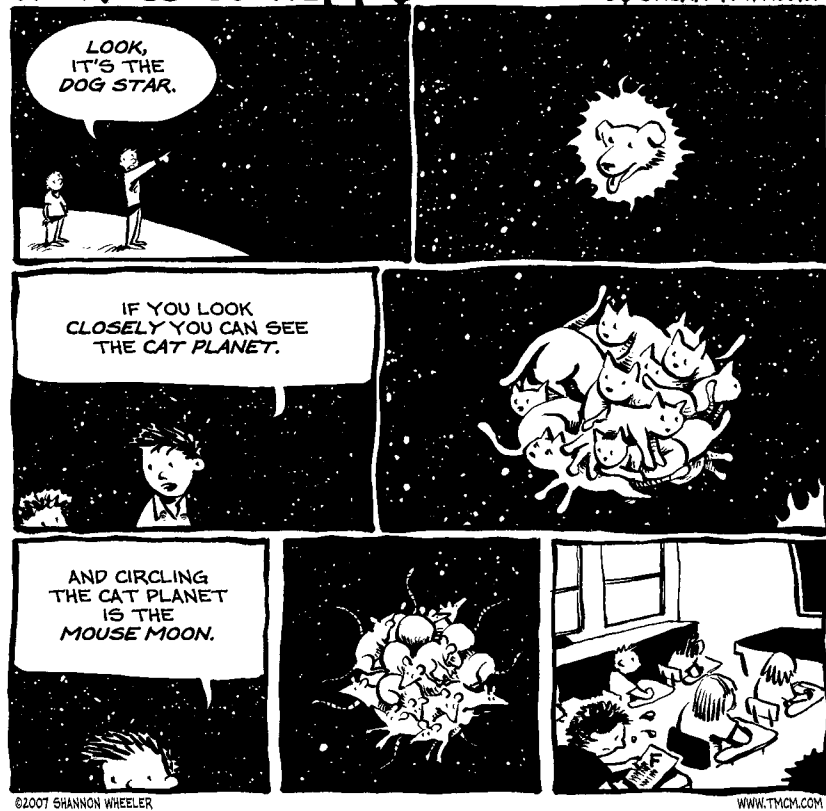


Clockwise from top left: Udow, Perrault, Smeed, Berger

Austin Berger, Mike Perrault, Sydney Smeed and Megan Udow are UO journalism majors. They hail from Hillsboro, Portland, Eugene and Vancouver, B.C.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MISTAKEN AIKEN

First off, let me start off by saying that I am against the arson committed by these environmental activists. Arson is a conservative way to deal with what you dislike. Burn crosses, burn books, burn record albums. They were only emulating what was taught to them by past conservatives. But what I can't figure out is the definition people are using for the word terrorist.

Judge Ann Aiken (whose new nickname should be Mistaken Aiken) says that environmental activists who, in her own words, harmed no one, have now been labeled as terrorists? Can someone provide a working definition for terrorist? Were the people who threw tea into Boston Harbor terrorists? Were the ones who left England and chose to form this country terrorists? Are the people who bomb abortion clinics terrorists? What about the people who are serving in Iraq, are they terrorists? The word is bandied about quite often in this post 9/11 world and it's lost all meaning except to harm others and strike fear into people.

Lastly, Aiken says that: "Fear and intimidation can play no part in changing the hearts and minds of people in a democracy." Then she must be against the war in Iraq and all other wars? It's funny, I wonder if she would have said that to President Bush.

Jared Wolfson
Eugene

A BIKE CHALLENGE

Nice article on biking in Eugene (cover story, 5/24). I suspect, though, that the people who don't use cars will find that the people who are car-bound will not comprehend the real transportation problems in Eugene. So, how about a challenge? If the mayor and City Council really want to see improvement in bike commuting rates (and perhaps understand a little more how the other half lives), they all should put away their cars for a month and get around under their own power or using public transit. Perhaps the whole city government should.

Problems are much more pressing when they are your own problems. Besides, it is late spring in Eugene; why would you want to spend it in a car?

Felicia Kenney
Eugene

A REVIVED DOWNTOWN

A recent letter (5/17) critiquing development in Silver Spring, Md., missed the mark. I lived in Silver Spring for the past three years, during which time the majority of the revitalization of the downtown was done. Prior to the change, downtown Silver Spring was a place many avoided. There was a decaying mall that (seemingly) existed merely as a place for the local teenagers to loiter. There were no restaurants to speak of, and the place was a ghost town on Friday and Saturday nights.

When the city finished the new downtown, people arrived in droves. No longer were Silver Spring residents streaming into downtown Washington, D.C., on the weekend because now they had their own hangout spot. The atmosphere was completely different. There were numerous new restaurants and people ate outside while kids played in fountains. It was a great change. There was even a large AstroTurf field for people to play or relax on though its fate was up in the air when I left.

The Silver Spring I knew went from being a depressed ghost town to a cool place to hang out. I do not know whether similar development should occur in Eugene or whether it would have the same effect. But I do know that it worked in Silver Spring. While Mr. Andrews feels like it turned Silver Spring into "an outdoor mall," the fact is that before the change there was nothing to do or see in downtown Silver Spring. While I dislike developers/development in general, such action was needed in Silver Spring; I do not know if such action is needed here.

Peter Fehrs
Eugene