

they'd know they were in the desert Southwest was the heat.

I fear that Eugene is headed in that direction. Springfield is already going there, but (meaning no disrespect to longtime Springfielders) it never had the reputation of being a funky, artsy, one-of-a-kind sort of town to begin with. If the chains move into downtown, Eugene can kiss its charm goodbye. I certainly wouldn't make a point of taking visiting friends downtown to shop and lunch. I mean, how on Earth could that be of any interest at all? To anyone?

*Davena Elder
Springfield*

THE BURN GOES ON

So field burning continues! It's so sad to have the powerful agricultural lobby in Salem overwhelm our health-care givers to allow field burning to continue to pollute our lungs and skies.

Scientists by now warn us that toxic exposure in the womb is linked to later health problems such as diabetes, prostate cancer, fertility problems, thyroid disorders and attention deficit. Two hundred scientists from five continents say there is growing evidence that humans are vulnerable to long-term exposure to toxic pollution.

The Oregon Medical Association, the

Lung Association, nurses and medical research scientists all warned us against farmers burning their fields. It was halted in Washington, California and even Idaho, but here in Oregon we allow the power of a few farmers to harm the health of everyone living in our valley.

This is another important reason for campaign finance reform. My thanks to Rep. Paul Holvey and the Oregon Toxic Alliance for their gallant effort.

*Ruth Duemler
Eugene*

UNTIL DEATH

There is a way to end global warfare if we can create its details and apply it to today's most powerful warmongering nation, the U.S. Put all the Bush people in jail who engineered their illegal Iraq war and keep them all there until death do they all part. This message of righteousness would end all major wars, for if the most grossly armed nation cannot get away with it, then no one can.

The first baby step in this process is to impeach the top U.S. war criminals. If we, the American people, cannot accomplish this first baby step, then we deserve all the massacres that the future will surely bring.

*Bob Saxton
Eugene*

A FATHER'S WISH

My Father's Day wish is that my sons adopt the value of a national conflict resolution skill-building program to a secure and prosperous future for themselves and their children, my grandchildren.

I want for Father's Day that my sons write to their congressional delegation: Violence is a learned conflict resolution strategy; violence is a public health problem that drains our nation's economy of trillions, sucking our intelligence and creativity dry; the technology to reduce military casualties, to eliminate spousal and child abuse, schoolyard bullying, rape and other forms of criminal violence is available; we can heal this disease, we have the key to the prison we are in.

In the last 40 years, the science of conflict resolution has been tested and validated. It now needs the importance, funding and coordination of a national mission to develop these skills throughout America. Rep. Peter DeFazio is co-sponsoring a bill in Congress right now to open a path to a bright future. HR808 would establish a Department of Peace and Nonviolence, a secretary of peace at the center of power and a peace academy to teach conflict resolution skills to our nation. More information is on the web at www.thepacealliance.org

As a father, President Bush could initiate

the legacy of a peaceful, prosperous world for his children. Sens. Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden are fathers. We all want this for our children. The founding fathers of our country, who claimed peace to be highest duty of a free country, would approve.

*David Hazen
Eugene*

A CHANCE FOR CHANGE

I want to thank Sen. Floyd Prozanski for the work he has done to get HB3540C passed, giving Oregonians the opportunity to express their will through their vote. Measure 37 affects all Oregon citizens regardless of whether one personally has filed a claim. The 7,000 Measure 37 claims that have been filed threaten over-development of Oregon's unparalleled landscape. This will affect our groundwater, increase traffic congestion and pollution and put a strain on our public services. HB3540C allows all citizens the right to decide if these consequences are ones they are prepared to face, not just those whose bank accounts stand to grow as a result of Measure 37. I strongly urge all Oregonians to vote their conscience on Nov. 6.

*Colleen Kimball
Eugene*



Borrowed Ideas

Or is it time to grow our own unique downtown?

Most of us have grown up in cities that have had what we would call a downtown. If they were small towns, there was probably a main street where you could get the things and services you needed and that you identified as the city's center. If they were larger cities like the Seattle I grew up in, downtown was a more complex and multicentered place.

As a lad of 7 in the early 1940s, I didn't have a complex image of downtown. I'd just catch the trolley that came every five minutes on Queen Anne Hill and ride down the counter-balance, heading for the magic shops along First Avenue, or to buy a cream puff at the public market or a hot fudge sundae at Newberry's counter.

Downtown is where I went to the doctor, to buy shoes and clothes and to go to the movies in theaters that had grand spacious interiors in ancient Egyptian decor. At Christmastime downtown, became the theater, and the whole family went downtown to walk the lighted streets and to look at the dazzling displays in the store windows, especially Frederick & Nelson's and the Bon Marché.

If you grew up in Eugene in the 1960s before the mall and the shopping centers, Willamette was your main street, your parade street, your butte-to-butte identity street. If you were the right age and had the right juices flowing, you dragged the gut and probably dropped into Seymour's after school.

And then things changed. You know the story. We OK'd the building of freeways and shopping malls, and major retail moved out of downtown. National outlets wanted much bigger spaces than downtown had to offer. And so along came the big box distribution centers surrounded by vast asphalt lakes of free parking, hooked up to freeway arteries to where suburban people lived. Big box hospitals, their healthy bottom lines connected to their Beltlines, continue this trend today.

The tragedy of the mall was that it threw millions of dollars at changes it didn't really understand and leveled a good portion of older downtown in the process. Remember when urban renewal tore down buildings, consolidated ownerships into whole blocks for development, offered them to developers and then no one came?

Are there lessons here to learn? Can we expect to be able to harken back and try to build the Seattles of our youth? It is a delicious, hot-fudge covered nostalgia, but probably not. Should we try to re-establish downtown Eugene as a major retail center? Wishing isn't going to make it so. The big box is already out of the box.

Should we restore theaters in the downtown by building a new cineplex? Maybe. With 20,000 students at the university nearby who could walk or take the EmX downtown, it might just work. But sharp pencils know that a given population can only support so many screens, and Valley River has recently invested in an all new digital complex. It could take deep pockets to be able to recapture a share of the local theater market.

Should we ignore trends and borrow some other city's latest idea the way we borrowed Fresno's mall? If you answered, "Wait a minute, isn't it time we did our own thinking?" you and I are on the same page.

Should we, for example, build park blocks to the river? Perhaps, like me, you love a variety of park and open space in a city. Downtown Savannah with its dense pattern set around 20-some small squares is one of my favorites. I do admire Portland's Park Blocks and do believe that it's important for us to establish a strong downtown connection to our downtown riverfront. But I also think Eugene somehow needs to find the confidence that it can find its own unique Eugenean solution to this problem, too.

I'd like to think we were smart enough to admire other places, perhaps even able to borrow some of the qualities that make them so special, without believing it's OK to superimpose them so literally on our town.

So let's say we were being asked to invest \$25 million plus in public dollars in Broadway area development downtown. What would we need to know - need to think about this time - before putting that much on the line? What tangible public gains should we be expecting - other than parking garages - to get from that much investment? And, I expect it's fair to ask, what can we do to minimize our risk?

The Downtown Plan, because it is so general, doesn't provide much guidance, which is why Mayor Piercy has formed an 11-member committee to help refine the area planning and clarify our public agenda before we agree to pungle up.

Some think the new group's task is to actually design the Broadway district, but I think their most important work will be to help the community reach agreement about a new kind of downtown, one that developers can help us build and that our children will look back on with fond memories and sustainable pride.

It won't be the way it was. It won't look just like Portland's Pearl District or anywhere else. It just might have a Willamette trolley connection to take all those new people living downtown to the Safeway store on 18th.

Some cities live and learn. Others just live.

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