



PEOPLE'S PARK IN THE LOT

Several dozen park supporters gathered Friday, Sept. 21, at the parking lot and pit across from the downtown Eugene Public Library to call for a park — by setting one up.

They brought potted trees and plants, lawn chairs, bikes, blankets, kids and dogs. Some played chess, Scrabble or Frisbee. There was even a violin and cello duet.

"I think a park would be a wonderful place down here," said Tim Boyden,

looking up from reading a book next to a potted tree. Boyden said it's "disgusting" that a downtown developer and the city only support a wide sidewalk at the site. "We need a park."

"A park is an essential part of a healthy downtown," said Jan Spencer, as group members began gathering signatures on the back of a sign. Parks are popular in Eugene, he said. In the \$200 million downtown redevelopment the city is considering, Spencer said he hopes "Eugene gets what fits Eugene and not some out-of-town corporation."

On a bike decorated with ivy, a sign read, "Bike and bus downtown and have a park instead of having to park."

Lou Ter said she was disappointed after she moved to Eugene from England and found there was no park where she could take her 4-year-old son after going to the library. "This would be a really nice addition and would contribute to people actually wanting to be here."

"Yeah," said her son Free after looking down through a chain-link fence at the Sears hole. "It would be cool."

Fergus McLean said opposition to the park proposal by the business and city establishment is a "class issue." McLean said, "the business community is saying we can't have a park downtown because then we'll have poor people."

After the protest, Pam Driscoll said she and some other participants plan to continue the event every Friday from 4:30 pm to sunset until the November election on the parkless redevelopment plan.

— Alan Pittman



ZELENKA'S ARENA POSITION

In response to talk of a possible recall effort over the issue of the UO basketball arena (*EW* 9/20), City Councilor Alan Zelenka said he only supports the project on the condition that the university address traffic, parking, noise and other neighborhood impacts.



Zelenka said he tried to contact UO Athletic Director Pat Kilkenny to discuss neighborhood concerns but got "zero" response from the UO. "The university has stifled the neighborhood on public process so far."

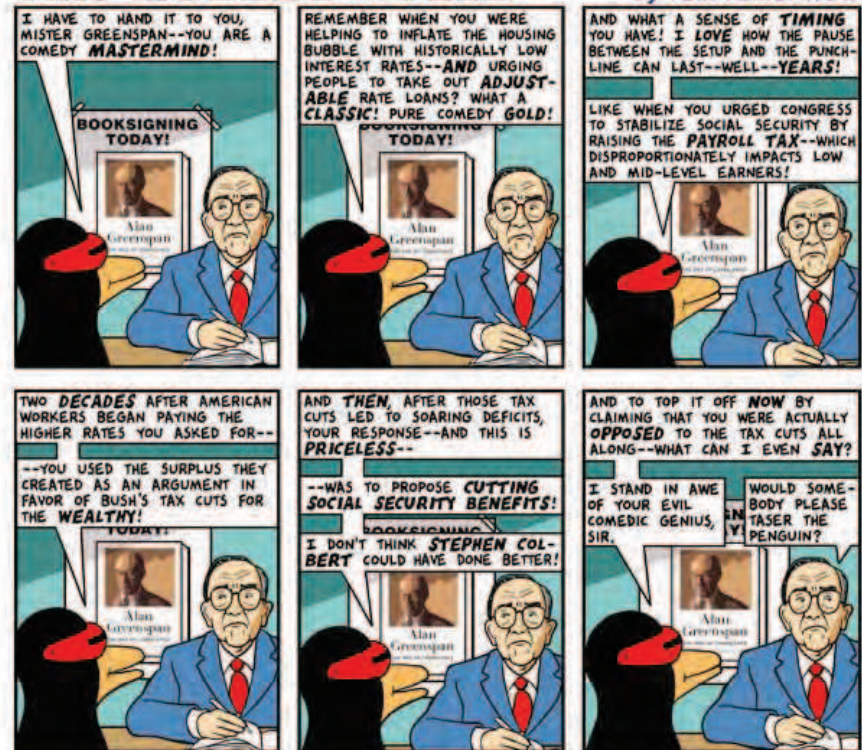
If the UO does not address the neighborhood impacts, Zelenka said he could still oppose the project. "It's conditional support."

Zelenka said the Fairmount Neighborhood Association voted to take a similar conditional stand on the project last year. In the past, Fairmount has been one of the most active and politically organized neighborhoods in the city. "They can respect the neighborhood and still have an arena," Zelenka said.

Zelenka said city planners have told him that the arena is an allowed use on the old light industrial bakery site. But Zelenka is not sure whether the larger footprint that the UO may pursue through condemnation or waivers of parking requirements would require zoning changes, council votes, hearings or special permits. The project would require a traffic impact study, he said. — Alan Pittman

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

MEET MR. NICE GUY

Oregon House Speaker and Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate Jeff Merkley rolled through Eugene recently on his whirlwind RV tour of Oregon. After stepping out of his brightly bedecked rig, he spoke to a crowd of about 70 Eugeneans, then lingered to chat and "press the flesh," as his spokesperson Russ Kelley put it.

The flesh-pressers included everyone from wide-eyed college students eager to start a campus campaign for Merkley to Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, who warranted a kiss on the cheek as well as a handshake.

Merkley, like fellow Democratic candidate Steve Novick (see *EW* 9/6), is running on an anti-Sen. Gordon Smith platform, with a little anti-Bush sentiment thrown in too. His stance is unsurprising, given that his main issues are ending the war, energy policy and health care, all areas where Smith is vulnerable or, as Merkley put it, "increasingly off track."

But that's about as vicious as Merkley gets. When asked about fellow candidate Novick, he has nothing but pleasant things to say. And what about Independent candidate John Frohnmayer's foray into the Senate race? Merkley smiles and says, "Everyone brings something to the arena." He mentioned neither of his opponents in his

stump speech, saving his criticisms there for the Republicans.

He's a little sensitive to criticism himself. When asked about *Willamette Week's* Sept. 12 article questioning the way he oversees his rental properties in Portland, his friendly smile changed briefly to an expression of hurt. He recovered his poise quickly and pointed out that he's never had a code violation — "a very good place to be."

In the housing realm, he also pointed to his background as executive director of Habitat for Humanity. Furthermore, "I founded the first Individual Development Account (IDA) program west of the Mississippi," he says. IDA programs help low-income families save money to buy a house, go to college or start a business.

There's no doubt that this nice guy is the darling of the Democrats — he's gotten endorsements from Gov. Ted

