Viewpoint BY BETTY TAYLOR

Risky Business

The case for smaller-scale redevelopment

After former City Manager Dennis Taylor secured options to purchase properties on West Broadway, I received emails from concerned business owners in the area. I took a midday walk and confirmed by observation that the most significant empty spaces were the completely empty Centre Court Building and the almost empty Washburn Building (before Davis' opened). It seemed to me, and to the property owners I talked with on the street, that renovating those two buildings and filling Aster's hole with a building would make a significant difference in the heart of downtown. Later, after a play at Lord Leebrick, a friend and I took an evening tour of the area. We visited John Henry's (where one of the patrons was a city planner), Horsehead and Luckey's, and looked into the Tango Center, which was filled with graceful dancers. What I observed was not blight or emptiness, but happy people enjoying music and refreshments — and interacting with each other. I have talked with area business people who are succeeding through hard work and financial investments and are worried about being re-located/dis-located/destroyed.

The threat to existing businesses is a paramount reason for my opposition to Measure 20-134, on which the West Broadway project depends. If the measure passes, no one knows what will be built or recruited or how much of citizens' advice will be incorporated. What is certain is that most of the buildings will be demolished (including two historically significant buildings — the ones that house Shawmed and Taco Time), that businesses will be damaged or destroyed (John Henry's, Tango Center, Horsehead, Bradford's Home Entertainment) or forced to re-locate (Scan Design) or threatened by unfair, subsidized competition (Luckey's, Bijou, Kiva — for example) or negatively affected by a long, extensive construction project (businesses on the periphery of the project area).

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It is true that KWG has expressed an intention to work to preserve existing businesses. That statement of intent is followed by a promise "to upgrade the character from the existing ground floor retail to create a lively and upscale environment" and an acknowledgement that the existing tenants "will have to be able to afford the new rent" (page 106 of the April 25 council agenda — information from KWG).

If the project is implemented, the destruction will be financed by an increased diversion of taxes from LCC, Lane Educational Service District, Lane County, the city government and public schools. Do any of these entities have excess funds? Anyone who thinks that all the money for urban renewal comes from taxpayers in the district should look at his/her property tax bill to see the amounts on the two lines labeled "Urban Renewal." We are all paying for it. Will our taxes increase because of the $40 million increase in the debt limit authorized by 20-134 — or will services be decreased? The money isn't free. Not only is the money diverted from needed services — it is easy to spend without public scrutiny. The only reason the current expansion of the debt limit is subject to a vote is that some business owners initiated a petition to put it on the ballot, causing the city to place it on the November ballot.

In addition to the destruction (of businesses) and diversion (of taxes), I am concerned about the delay (of positive actions) caused by the project. The housing proposal by TK (Kemper) for the Sears site was approved by the City Council Oct. 16 and, according to city Development Manager Denny Braud's answer to my question at a May 14 council meeting, would have been completed "about this time" if it hadn't been halted in favor of pursuing the large project. If we had approved Beam's proposal to renovate two buildings and fill Aster's hole, that project would have been started by now — all of this without increasing the debt limit. We all want to fill the holes, and we can do it without authorizing the additional $40 million. By accepting the Beam proposal, we can revamp the center of downtown and loosen the hold of Connor/Woolley (owners of Centre Court , Washburn and the hole on Willamette) on the area. And we can adhere to our avowed principles of sustainability (by rehabilitating and reusing the Centre Court and Washburn buildings) and support of local business (by removing the threat of demolition and forced re-location to existing businesses).

Rather than fostering destruction, diversion and delay, I urge voters to defeat Ballot Measure 20-134 and ask City Council to proceed with positive actions within our current financial ability.

Eugene City Councilor Betty Taylor represents south Eugene's Ward 2. She has a doctorate in English and retired from teaching at the high school, community college and university levels.

Letters TO THE EDITOR

WINTER WONDERLAND

I have a vision for downtown that was inspired by a recent trip to Ashland. There is a gorgeous wooded park right in the heart of downtown that draws people of all ages. It has a beautiful stream that runs through the park then right out into the city. All sorts of shops and restaurants have sprung up along its banks, allowing for streamside dining. The natural beauty draws you downtown. Wooden and stone bridges, steps and benches are everywhere. What an asset to the city!

I believe Mother Nature has the cure to our downtown dilemma. I would love to see a beautiful pond or water feature of some kind go into that big hole downtown. Something natural looking, surrounded by trees and greenery. Are there no creative local designers that could come up with something unique and natural and truly Eugene? Why not build a massive greenhouse-style park or green space for year round enjoyment? My kids and I would be there all winter!

Jennifer L. Walker
Junction City

WHEN IT WAYNES, IT POURS

I was in attendance at the Lil Wayne/Sean Kingston/Charlie Murphy/Fat Joe/GreenState event put on by 94.9 Jamz, *Eugene Weekly*, EyeBeam Event Services and Cricket Wireless. I am SHOCKED that the promoters are not offering at least a 50 percent refund to the people who paid $60-plus to see one of the worst events I have ever attended. This event was abysmal.

The woman in the ticket office told us that there were four headliners so the show was still going on. This is absolutely outrageous. If this were the case then why was Lil Wayne's name twice the size of all the other "headliners" on every piece of promotional material for the event? 94.9 Jamz should have canceled the concert and offered a full refund when they found out the true headliner of the show would not be attending. Instead of making the obvious ethical decision, they continued to hype Lil Wayne's performance all night long. The DJs and opening acts *and* the people in the ticket office were spreading the misinformation that Wayne was going to show up and that he was "out of jail heading to Eugene."

As for the other acts, GreenState was terrible. There was a good reason they were booed off stage. Fat Joe only performed a few songs and with little enthusiasm, and Sean Kingston didn't even try to lip-sync to his recorded audio. Pathetic at best.

Who gets to pocket the money that Wayne would have gotten had he showed up? Even if Wayne was paid up front for his performance, it is on the promoters to recoup that money from him and in the meantime settle up with the outraged customers who they misled.

I for one will never attend a 94.9 Jamz sponsored event unless this situation is rectified. I will also refuse to spend money on or patronize any of the other companies that had their names on the screens behind the artists. These include EyeBeam Event Services, *EW* and Cricket Wireless.

The event promoters should be ashamed of the way they handled the situation. Please show your patrons that you are not the thieving and lying group of corporate slime that you have made yourselves out to be: Give people a 50 percent refund for their tickets and work in the future to make ethical decisions in your promotions.

Zachary Payne
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: EW *was not involved in any aspect of the management of this show, including ticket sales.*

THREE AT A BLOW

Consider these three dilemmas. First, UO football games could generate so many potential drunks that the Eugene Police Department estimates that it would require 40 extra policeman to deal with the lawbreakers if drinking is banned on parking lots surrounding Autzen Stadium. Second, Lane County is desperately short of funds. Third, Phil Knight is so awash in cash that he can waste it on a basketball palace. How about this for a solution? Allow drinking in all parking lots near Autzen. Authorize Lane County