



WILLIAM C. MIDDLETON

The city-owned Sears pit

BIG VOTE? NEVER MIND

Remember the big fight over the future of downtown Eugene culminating in a vote last month by 49,326 people? Well, none of that may have mattered.

Nothing may have been built anyway as the nationwide crash of the housing market dried up financing for development.

It's "extraordinarily difficult to get financed" now, said developer Tom Kemper. His KWG had proposed a \$200 million remake of downtown with parking garages, chain stores and condos. "Lenders are just not interested."

"The credit market has really crashed," said Pete Eggspuehler of Beam Development. "It's not a comment on the city of Eugene."

Beam had proposed a smaller historic remodel of the Centre Court, Aster pit and Washburn buildings with a mix of local tenants. That more locally focused, incremental approach drew support from most of the citizens who campaigned against the larger measure to subsidize KWG, and defeated the measure with a 64 percent vote.

Given the housing crunch, "I wonder where we would have been" if the \$40 million developer subsidy had passed, asked Councilor Bonny Bettman. "The voters were pretty wise. If the risk is too much for the developers, it's too much for the community."

Beam principal Brad Malsin said despite the credit crunch, he remained "very interested" in pursuing the smaller project. Beam said his project is a longer-term investment less subject to short-term market drops and is less focused on now risky condos. "We think we can make it work with a little cooperation" from the city, he said.

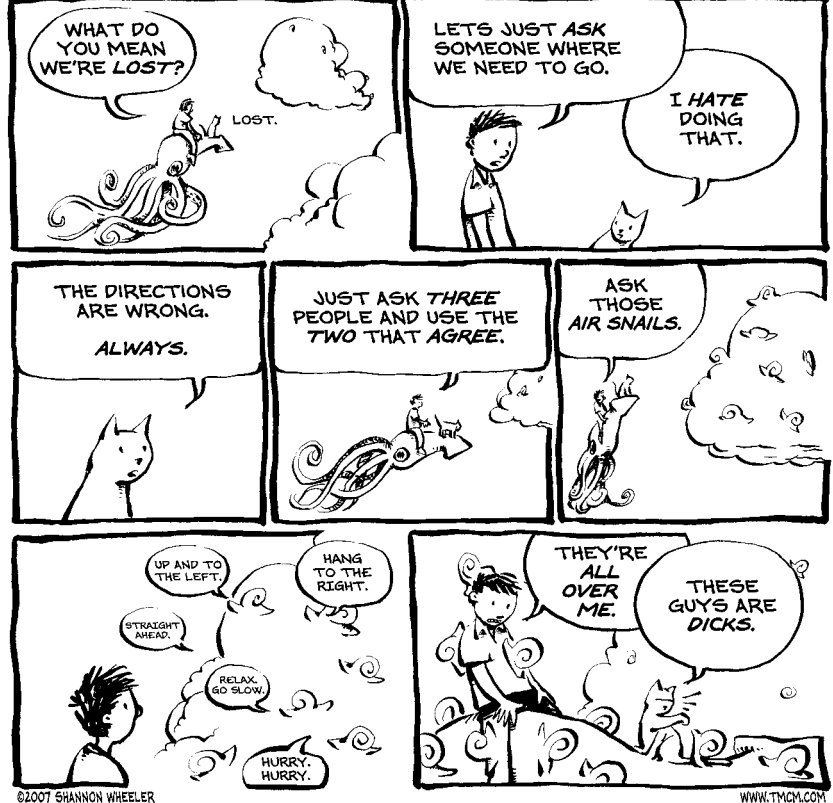
Kemper committed to redevelop the Sears pit with 106 condos and a retail shop a year before submitting the large \$200 million proposal. But he said he may now want to drop everything after the market fall.

"I'm far less enthusiastic about Sears than 15 months ago," Kemper said. "I certainly wouldn't do it under the timeline we were talking about."

Councilors Bettman and Taylor said that if Kemper was backing out of the previous agreement to break ground in 12 months, then the city may have to look for another developer rather than let Kemper sit on the pit indefinitely.

Councilor Taylor pointed out the city has owned the property for more than a dozen years without redeveloping it. "It's important that we act." — *Alan Pittman*

How to Be Happy (13 OF 8) by Shannon Wheeler



news Briefs

NEW CITY HALL? NEVER MIND

After spending more than \$2 million on consultants and more than two years of meeting time on a proposal for a new City Hall building, the City Council voted last week to put the city bureaucracy's top priority on the back burner.

In the wake of losing two ballot measures last month, the council voted 4-3 on Nov. 28 to delay a vote on a \$150 million new City Hall until at least 2010.

"Staff deserves City Hall, they really do," said Councilor Chris Pryor. But Pryor said the city shouldn't "send a message" that the city's internal priorities are more important than citizen priorities.

City executive Jim Carlson told councilors that instead of using its \$35 million facility reserve to reduce the tax increase for a new City Hall, the city could use the money to build a new police station. "You could use the resources you already have."

The city squirreled away the reserve money essentially by cutting services to taxpayers. By spending the diverted money on a new police building, the city would avoid a difficult vote. Bond measures for a new police station have already failed three times at the ballot box.

Pryor and other council conservatives claimed that road repair is a top voter priority and successfully pushed for a May 2008 vote on a property tax to fund it. But voters may not want to put their money in potholes. The gas tax on the Nov. 6 ballot failed with 56 percent voting no. — *Alan Pittman*

SENATE TO VOTE ON HOMEGROWN TERROR

Local activists fear that vague language in a bill recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives will allow the government to prosecute "thought crimes." HR 1955, "the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007" was passed on Oct. 23 with very little media attention. The bill has now moved to the Senate.

The bill states that "violent radicalization" is "the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change." However the bill does not define what an "extremist belief system" is, nor does it explain what it means to be

"facilitating" ideologically based violence.

The bill passed overwhelmingly in the House with a vote of 404-6, with 22 members not voting. Presidential hopeful Dennis Kucinich was among the few dissenters. Oregon's Rep. Peter DeFazio voted in favor of the bill as did Reps. Hooley, Wu, Walden and Blumenauer.

The Homegrown Terrorism Bill is actually an amendment to the 2002 Homeland Security Act. It defines homegrown terrorists as groups or individuals "born, raised or primarily operating" in the U.S. who use, plan or threaten to use force or violence against the government or civilians "in furtherance of political or social objectives." Such objectives could include anything from environmentalism to civil rights.



The legislation would establish a commission to report on homegrown terrorism as well as establish a university-based "Center of Excellence for the Study of Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism in the United States" that would use data from anthropologists and other social and behavioral scientists to study violent radicalization and homegrown terrorism.

The legislation specifically targets the Internet, stating it has "aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process" in the U.S. by allowing access to "broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda."

Lauren Regan of Eugene's Civil Liberties Defense Center is calling for people to urge their senators to vote against the bill. For more information go to www.cldc.org or call 687-9180. — *Camilla Mortensen*