

**NAKED BIKE RIDE?**

As a native Portlander, past Eugene resident and everyday cyclist, it comes as little surprise that the city's bike commuting rate is shrinking in the face of Portland's success (news story, 11/21).

Eugene essentially functions like a suburb, its citizens continually fighting increased density, beginning with past building height restrictions downtown in the hopes of "keeping things the same." These efforts have severely reduced the vibrancy of the urban core and pushed all new development along major arterials (read West 11th, Coburg Road, Highway 99, River Road), effectively preventing all but the bravest bike commuters from riding into town.

The city-sanctified Bridge Pedal has little to do with it — there are almost weekly events organized by Portland citizens, nonprofits and businesses, and if Eugeneans really wanted a bike event, they could organize one independently (naked bike ride, anyone?). But this tradition of (over)reactive citizenship instead of proactive leadership typifies the town; all those abandoned warehouses along the river were just waiting for their Pearl District makeover, and some denser student housing in place of the rotten west campus slums would be an extra bonus.

You want more bikes? Replace all the ground level parking lots downtown with *one*

garage (it can even be underground like Portland's newest park) and build mixed-use. You don't need more parks, you don't need more bike boulevards; the bikers will ride in *past* the car traffic, and the downtown residents will walk. As far as all the West 11ths/82nds of the world: The sins of the father will visit the children.

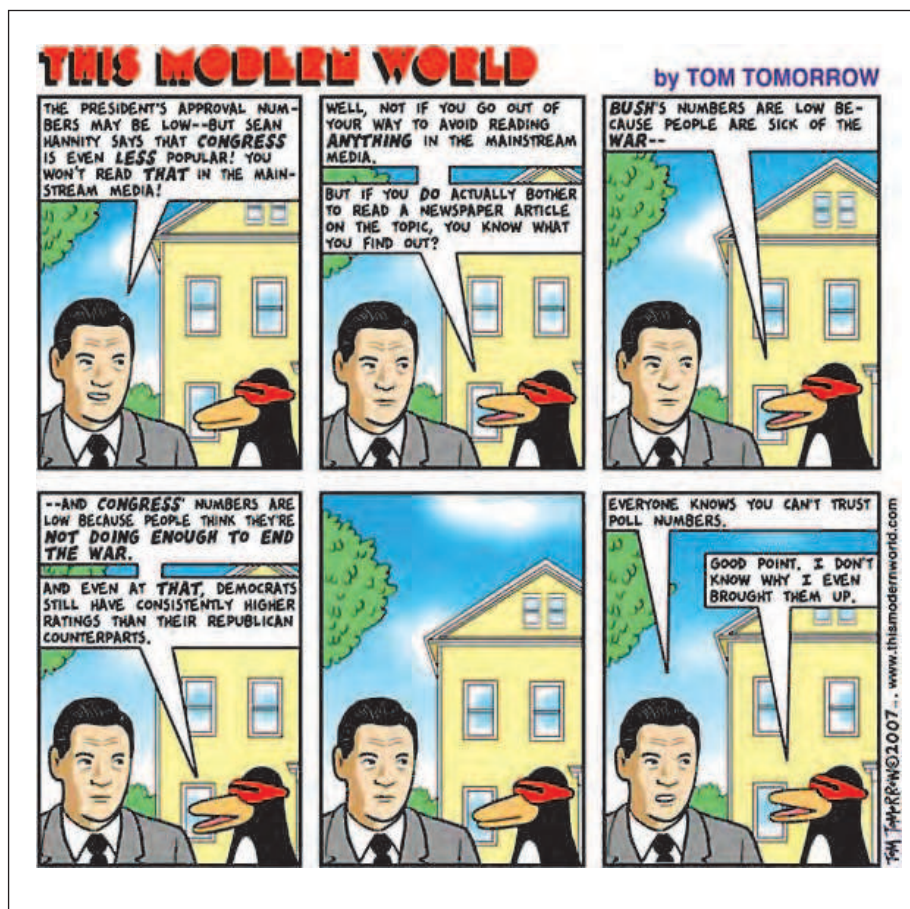
Michael Geffel  
Portland

**GREEN ROOF EUGENE**

With all this talk of revamping downtown; the thoughts of tearing down established (and wanted) buildings so the city can allot more money into "new growth": Why not put more green into Eugene?

I bike around and I see posters saying "Strawberry Fields or Cement" and other catchphrases. Why not reach a happy medium? The city already wants to "invest" a lot of money in making downtown more productive. So I suggest putting what are known as green roofs on the older buildings, and with the new ones that might get built, make it mandatory to put green roofs on them as well.

The idea is simple: Bring back some of the organic material displaced by development these days. We all know it's always hotter in the city, which makes the energy costs a



little excessive during the heat waves. With the placement of green roofs, we would get things like: keeping it cool for those hot summer times. Working with maintaining storm-water overflow. Helping insulate the heat for

the rest of Oregon's breezy and notorious weather. And, of course, bringing back the greenery of what Eugeneans love so much about Oregon. Old civilizations have been documented to do this. People in the Bronx

**natural resistance** BY MARY O'BRIEN

**Irreconcilable Differences?**

Tackling the impossible through collaboration



I promise to report back a year from now. I'm participating in two collaborative efforts wherein people who have disagreed for a long time have agreed to try to agree. By next December, when I'll report again, each collaboration will be succeeding, middling or failing. I don't know how (or whether) differences will be resolved, but if "Peace on Earth" is going to remain a reasonable human goal, people who disagree are going to have to do something other than merely trying to defeat or kill each other.

The first is the urban West Eugene Collaboration, which includes conservationists, business, government and community representatives. Its long-sentence purpose is to "Develop an integrated land use and transportation solution supported by stakeholders that will facilitate movement of people and commerce from/through/to west Eugene and west of Eugene while enhancing community, business, and the environment." In other words, think of something to do other than arguing about the 20-year-old West Eugene Parkway. We plan to propose solutions by December 2008.

It will be quite the accomplishment if we come up with a land use and transportation solution supported by Eugene's divided stakeholders. Likewise, it is quite the task to figure out how to *enhance* the environment with land use and transportation developments rather than merely limiting environmental *damage* of such developments. But that's the ambitious goal.

The second collaboration is the rural southern Utah Tushar Allotments Collaboration (<http://tushar.ecr.gov>), which includes conservationists, cattle permittees and government representatives. Its goal is to agree by April 2009 on changed practices on two long-overgrazed cattle allotments of 42,000 acres.

The odds against consensus solutions in either of these face-to-face collaborative groups might seem long, but here are some elements I see going for both:

- *Unfounded claims can be challenged* more effectively than from behind dueling op-ed pieces, organizations or ads.
- *Joint on-ground visits* to sites of disputes or proposals change perceptions and increase mutual understanding.
- *Joint gathering and examination of evidence* reduces both ignorance and PR spin.
- *Each participant's proposals and concerns matter*, reducing inequalities in numerical, economic or political power.
- *Each participant has the responsibility to put forward proposals* she or he thinks the others can live with rather than merely putting forth demands.

- *Listening is rewarded* because those who listen will better discern what proposals might appeal.
- *Innovation is rewarded* because rehashed proposals won't move people out of their corners.
- *Hard work is rewarded* because those who develop the best information-based proposals are the most likely to see them incorporated.
- *Being sleazy won't get anyone far* because everyone else is watch-

- ing.
- *Anyone can ask crucial questions* that often aren't asked in standard planning processes.
- *Some people are funnier face-to-face*, which helps free people.
- *Affection*, spontaneously arising as it does among at least some people who spend time together, reduces rigidities.
- *Both collaborations have neutral facilitators* to keep the process moving and fair.

**W**ell, that's fine for process. How do joint solutions arise despite fundamental differences? For instance, take the West Eugene Collaboration. I believe we should make every possible contribution toward reliance on public transit, non-motorized transportation and altered configuration of homes, businesses and industry because 1) global warming = global biological, social, economic and political

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crises; and 2) U.S. transportation alone emits more carbon dioxide (CO2) than all but three other countries' emissions from all sources combined. A second participant has said it doesn't matter if we reduce CO2 emissions because someone else will burn oil if we

don't. A third figures technological fixes will allow us to have more cars. And a fourth claims human activities aren't causing global warming.

By themselves, these beliefs would lead to varied, perhaps irreconcilable, proposals for west Eugene land use and transportation. But such beliefs don't exist in isolation from other beliefs held by the same four individuals that *do* coincide. Further, solutions we consider here don't exist in isolation from other cities' innovations that might appeal to us *despite* our different perspectives on cars and global warming.

It is the multiplicity of beliefs, findings and innovations worldwide, in combination with processes such as those listed above, that allow diverse participants to have a hope of configuring solutions acceptable to them and their communities.

At least that's my belief. Let's see where we get by next December.

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