

The Best We Can Do?

City missing an opportunity downtown

In a recent rant, published in this paper as a letter (8/7), I took the Eugene City Council to task for their refusal to make open space a requirement in the RFPs for the half-block development across from the library, for their arrogance (after soliciting public suggestions) in refusing even to discuss my urban park proposal and for not giving the public a vote on the matter. It's absurd that a decision of this magnitude affecting the entire community should be dictated by the uninformed opinions of a few people.



The council's primary objection to a library park seems to be that it would attract undesirables. Excuse me, but the undesirables are already there, and not because of a park. As Cliff Lind, a senior associate at DHM Design in Denver states, "The concept that parks attract undesirable people lost traction across most of the country 10 or 15 years ago. This is when people realized that well maintained urban parks designed with open sight lines, plenty of light and engaging spaces for workers to eat lunch or take a break in don't allow 'undesirable people' to move in."

Eugene can be great, but not if the council proceeds with plans to jam the half block across from the Library solid with buildings (which, incidentally, would impede the view of the library's nice architecture). The councilors should explain why they have not bothered to talk to cities such as Colorado Springs, Olympia, Salem and Corvallis about the great social and long term economic successes of their urban parks. In short, Eugene needs something downtown that people can get excited about: a commons area that will stimulate community participation, not a comparatively dry, bean-counter's monolith. WG Development has admitted that it really doesn't want the public to access the rather ho-hum "quasi plaza" it envisions behind closed gates. Is this really the best we can do? Let WG develop the Sears pit, by all means. But, let's rethink the rest of the half block.

In my rant I did the unthinkable: I ridiculed Eugene's slogan. Here's my point, better illustrated:

Rather than boasting that Eugene is "The World's Greatest City for The Arts and Outdoors," the city needs to take a more humble stance and look at Eugene objectively. Elected officials need to listen and somehow learn to discriminate between what is authentic and what is not. Sophomoric, over-the-top pronouncements are not the way. Eugene has some nice things going for it, most notably the fact that it is situated in an idyllic Northwest valley. But the city can't take responsibility for that. Striving for greatness takes courage and vision. Settling for fear-driven options and short-term fixes does not. Yes, Eugene does have a lot going for it, but it can be even better, and that's the passion behind my remarks. Eugene could be a greater city if only the bureaucrats would be willing to go for it. No individual and no city ever attained greatness by playing it safe, being unwilling to dare to be great. Too many Eugene officials posture as important movers and shakers while, in fact, surrendering to fear and defeatism.

One has to be naïve and full of hubris to assert that Eugene is "The World's Greatest City for the Arts and the Outdoors." What do you think Rome, Milan, Paris, New York City, San Francisco and Honolulu would say to that? Is The Hult Center greater than Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, the Milan Opera House? Is local jazz greater than that played at The Blue Note or Sweet Basil or The Blackhawk? Is the architecture in Eugene greater than the Chrysler Building, the Taj Mahal or the Eiffel Tower? Is the smattering of sculpture in Eugene greater than *David*, the *Laocoön* or *Venus de Milo*? Are the murals on Eugene walls greater than the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? Is the art that hangs in the Mayor's Art Show greater than the work in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Prado, the Louvre? And to what outdoors does the motto refer? Certainly not the sorry core of the city. Eugene has the Willamette, which is a fine river, but you don't have to go any further than the McKenzie or the North Umpqua or Rogue to find a greater one. These rivers are world famous.

Eugene doesn't have to compete with the great capitals of the world. After all, much of its charm has to do with its smaller scale. It just needs to be all that it can be. And in order to be self-respecting, let alone great, any city the size of Eugene needs to have a welcoming urban park that the community can point to with pride.

Thomas Lincoln of Springfield is a semi-retired graphic artist and designer. Most of his award-winning design career was spent in New York City working for major corporations and publishing houses.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

incinerating the neighborhood is found.

For this reason, it is highly unlikely that hydrogen will ever provide more than a tiny fraction of our energy needs. Far better to harness the wind on our coast and the Columbia Gorge, among many other places nationwide.

*Jerry Ritter
Springfield*

EMX REVISITED

To those who should be concerned: I ride the EmX with my bicycle, and on two recent occasions I was nearly put on the floor because I was not given time to safely sit before the bus moved into traffic. One time three bikes were boarding. I was second due to the courtesy of a young man's deference to my age. The bus bolted while the young man was still standing perpendicular to the direction of travel. He was hit hard with his own bike and nearly fell. If it had been me waiting my turn for the rack, I would have fallen with my bike on top. Given my age and the health of my back, you would have to had carry me off the bus on a stretcher.

This is, unfortunately, not an isolated incident. I have witnessed numerous incidence of passenger safety jeopardized by drivers not making sure everyone is seated. This is not a New York subway. Please re-evaluate your drivers' safety procedures. I'm dismayed that after the incident last year with the left behind children that there has not been much improvement in driver protocol. I'm sending a copy of this to *The Register-Guard* and the *Weekly* in hopes that people with similar experiences will contact you and increase your liability in case of an accident.

*Vince Loving
Eugene*

OCF FORWARD THINKING

My sincerest heartfelt thanks to the producers and volunteers of the Oregon Country Fair. To me the OCF is an example of humanity at its finest, and I believe that the impact that the Fair has on the forward movement of our society is unknowable but large. The Fair continues to grow more energy and waste-conscious yearly and leads our world in the right direction through gentle positive changes. I'd love to see more booths dedicated to crafts created by young people in the future; let's see what the next generation is creating and support their efforts!

Thanks again to all those who support and make the Fair happen, from a lover of the Oregon Country Fair.

*Albert Kaufman
Portland*

OPPORTUNIST REPORTER

It is interesting to read about the May 30 Van Ornum et al/Eugene police Taser incident in the *Weekly* and the *R-G*. I was present just after the incident started, and my recollections (and I saw it clearly from a vantage point!) do not jibe with either the *Weekly's* printed version or the *R-G's* story. Is there any way *EW* can obtain the EPD's report of the incident and see how "off-base" their version is?

Tim Lewis claims to be a "reporter." Why don't we see his byline/articles in any of our local papers? I think I would classify

Lewis as an "opportunist reporter" — that is, he takes video in hopes of recording an incident he can peddle to one of the media giants, similar to the person that videoed the Rodney King/LAPD beating incident. It's my understanding that this person sold the video for a large enough sum of money to retire and live comfortably for the rest of his life.

Is Lewis trending along these lines?

*Lon Miller
Drain*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tim Lewis has been documenting environmental issues and political actions since the 1990s for broadcast and web media. Seems to us to be an unlikely career path for personal wealth. Actually, we'd love to see Tim sell some footage so he can buy a better video camera.

BALANCING SPACE

It is a basic design precept to balance a large public indoor space with a large outdoor space. This gives the indoor space a sense of freedom of movement and gives the outdoor space a purpose and population. With this understanding it becomes apparent that a public park across from the library would be more appropriate than another big building full of people. The library is a graceful, well-designed building. Let's complement it with a well-designed park.

*Kari Johnson
Eugene*

BLIND PARTISANSHIP

I am not usually one to respond to letters to the editor, but in the July 24 *EW* read one so idiotic that it merits at least one reply pointing out its complete lack of logic and reason. The author, a Jonathan Seraphim, compared Republicanism to fascism in his "No Sir, Yes Sir," an allegation that is quite possibly the largest exaggeration I have ever heard. If this were true, Seraphim would not even have the opportunity to publish his passionate, albeit moronic, letter to the editor. He would be put to work under horrible conditions in a prison camp with other Americans who disagreed with the government. But, seeing as how Eugene still has a population, clearly the Bush administration isn't rounding up liberals by the dozen and imprisoning them. Thus, they are not the least bit fascistic in nature.

Hey, I'm not even much of a fan of the Bush boys, but this kind of blind partisanship (Democrats=courageous heroes; Republicans=corporate Nazis) causes my imbecile alarm to ring with seemingly no sign of stopping. Perhaps this letter will quell, at least for a while, this most annoying feature of my personality.

Oh, and Seraphim, get your systems of government right. You cannot compare Republicans to Nazis and in the same sentence liken them to Maoists and Soviets. You see, any moderately educated person would know that communism and fascism, though both equally deplorable forms of governing people, are completely opposing forces. The Nazis imprisoned communists; they weren't in cahoots with them. Behind your nice vocabulary and good sentence structure, you have absolutely nothing of merit to say. Save us your reactionary antics and actually put some thought into your next letter.

*Ethan Findal
Springfield*