

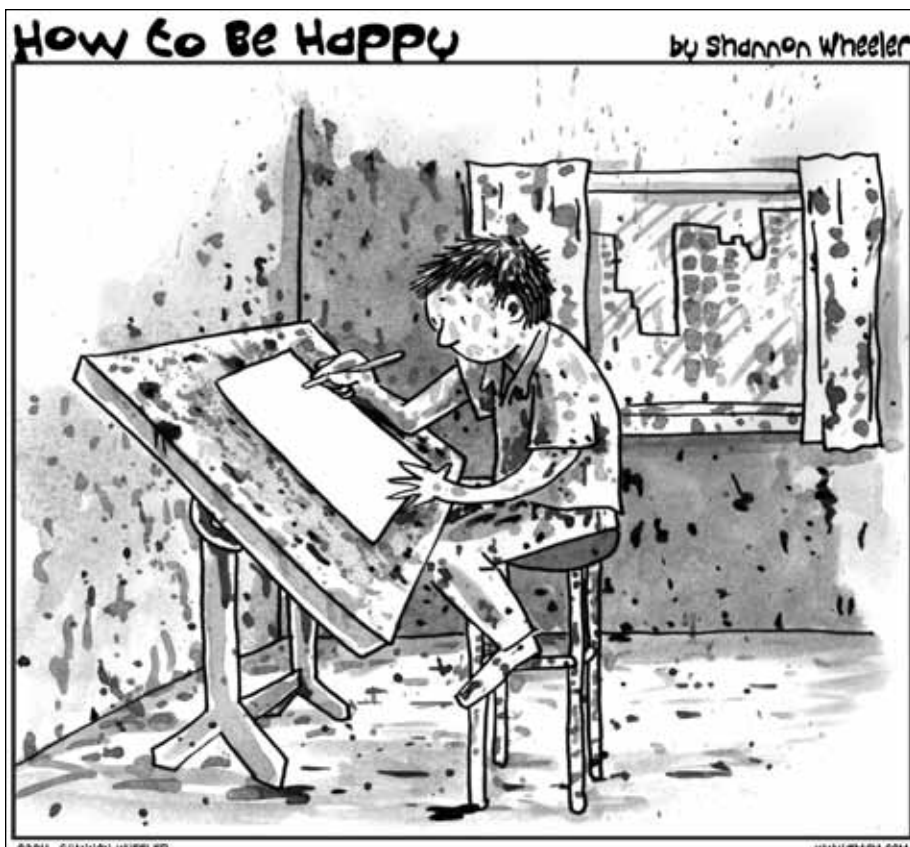
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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**GROWING INWARD**

I deeply appreciate the coverage of local environmental and planning issues provided by the *Eugene Weekly*, which is regularly both more probing and more accurate than what our community gets from any other local media.

In that spirit, I'd like to add to and clarify one aspect of the 3/10 Weekly article "Envision Sprawl."

When I referred to an Envision Eugene group that is "really lopsided" to development-oriented interests, and "...oppressively dominated by the homebuilders and the Chamber," I wasn't thinking of the overall Envision Eugene Community Resource Group (CRG).

The 60-plus-person CRG group has seemed to me to be broadly inclusive and fairly well balanced, and during most of its many day-long meetings, the CRG worked largely in a genuinely collaborative, consensus-oriented process.

For instance, I think much of the strength of protections around neighborhood concerns in the current draft Envision Eugene proposal comes from the diverse neighborhood voices around the big circle of the CRG.

However, in the last accelerated month of CRG meetings, the process seemed to shift the role of the CRG gradually from profound community consensus building, to something more like a jumbo focus group providing feedback on the draft proposal emerging from City staff.

In the course of that rush month, four committees were started to continue CRG work between meetings at a finer level of detail. To these committees were distributed some of the most controversial and technically pivotal details of the Envision Eugene planning process.

And it was with regard to these committees, three of which are still meeting, that I complained of substantial imbalance. At least two of these committees appear to have an absolute majority who are paid representatives of development-related interests — numbers that can readily swamp the broad public interest.

Equally troubling, in these continuing committees spun out from the CRG

without a firm grasp on maintaining consensus process, the collaborative seeking for win-win approaches, to meet real long term community needs, seems to have broken down. (The 400 to 500 acre industrial expansion number came out through just such a breakdown.)

The committees are still fixable. With a restoration of balance in their membership, and a renewal of real consensus facilitation, it is very possible that the good work of the Envision Eugene CRG could continue at a finer level.

To my eye, the overall value of the Envision Eugene effort hangs in the balance. Will the outcome be high-minded veneer providing a thin progressive veneer on development business-as-usual? That would be a disaster for the next generation of Eugonians.

Or will the outcome be a firm change of direction for development in Eugene, letting 6,000 more single family detached homes by 2031 be enough — in addition to the 47,000 already here — while setting our strong focus on high-quality mixed-use redevelopment in the existing commercial areas in the inner half of the UGB and firmly protecting our established residential neighborhoods?

That could be a win-win-win for walkability, for our spirit of community, for affordable housing and transit, for the nature around us and for the development community. We need to help build a more compact, more efficient, more beautiful Eugene.

Come to the public hearing on April 25, 2011, and let the Eugene City Council hear what you think about planning for Eugene to grow inward, in the underused core commercial areas, or planning to grow outward, onto farmland, forests and rare natural areas.

*Kevin Matthews*  
*Friends of Eugene*

**OUTDATED VIEWS**

Before I moved to Eugene, I had assumed her to be a place full of social and political progression, which included progressive views of marriage and sexual

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