



Plywood covers the lower glass panels of the old showroom

PHOTO BY TED TAYLOR

NEW PLANS FOR OLD DEALERSHIP

Looking at the old Romania car dealership on Franklin Boulevard, it's hard to imagine what it was like during its heyday back in the 1960s and '70s. Back then, the wall of glass was bright and squeaky clean, a window into a dazzling display room showcasing the latest Chevrolet models. The parking lot, now empty and in a losing battle with the local flora, once played host to legions of Cameros, Chevelles, Corvairs and Corvettes, the chrome polished to perfection.

Now it stands along Franklin as a reminder of older times, the distinctive '50s Google futuristic architecture sorely out of place among the new development around it. The glitz and glamour is gone, replaced with hard asphalt and the occasional discarded beer bottle. Many say it's an eyesore, a relic that should be demolished to make way for something better. Others point out that the building made its way onto Oregon's National Register of Historical Places and should be restored to its former glory.

The UO, which acquired the property in 2007, has set up a consulting team to decide just what to do with the currently derelict building. Spearheaded by Lorig Associates, a real estate development firm based out of Seattle, the project will develop several possible uses for the building and present them to the public in mid-August.

"The university is not entirely sure what the best use of the land might be," said Christopher Ramey, associate vice president for Campus Planning and Real Estate, via email. "This is the point of commissioning the study. We expect to know considerably more about what our options are when the study is completed."

The study has three goals: to get input from the community on what the best use of the land might be, analyze the market with the possibility of selling the property to private interests, and create scenarios for development.

Because the building is on the National Register, potential developers are faced with a unique dilemma. If they choose to keep the building, they have to abide by the myriad regulations laid down by the state designed to preserve the original design. The National Register does not, however, protect a building from being razed to the ground, which then allows the developer or the UO to do whatever they want with the property, including just building another big parking lot.

Right now the UO is still considering its options. The building and land are too far away from the rest of campus to house what are referred to as "core university needs" —classrooms, faculty offices, libraries, labs and other areas related to education, which limits its usefulness.

"At this point in the process we don't want to rule things out (with the noted exceptions)," said Ramey via email. "What we are looking for in the study is what kinds uses might make sense, and we don't want to constrain the thinking at this point." — *Nils Holst*

• This week's cover story takes a look **inside Lane County government**, and we discover it's a mysterious institution with a cast of characters that would make a great TV drama. It's a mix of *Law and Order* with *Survivor*, *Dirty Sexy Money* and *Californication*. Actually, a tremendous amount of good work and critical services are provided by Lane County, but as county employees go about their essential work, we are observing a disturbing shift in leadership away from the sound thinking that would benefit the people of Lane County for generations. The bright ideas that support sustainability, local enterprise and self sufficiency are being shelved in favor of the same old outdated policies that favor polluting industries, resource extraction and criminal prosecution. This shift in policy by *Men Behaving Badly* is happening without the open, public process that was the hallmark of Commissioners Fleenor, Handy and Sorenson when they were in the majority.

Our new County Administrator Liane Richardson has not impressed us so far with her *Lost in Space* hiring and spending decisions. She still blames the spotted owl for Lane County's economic woes. Is this *The Twilight Zone*?

• "Sticking your neck out" was the criteria for the 2011 **Annual Turtle Awards** handed out July 8 at the City Club of Eugene meeting in the Hilton. Carmen Urbina, parent, community and diversity coordinator for School District 4J, and Dan Bryant, pastor of the First Christian Church, took the Turtles this year before a crowd including many former Turtle winners. Their speeches, after intros by Gerry Gaydos, Marion Malcolm and Guadalupe Quinn, reaffirmed the power of positive action. We need that today!

A cautionary note for future Turtles from Dan Bryant: "If you're going to stick your neck out, you better have a strong back." KLCC broadcasts audio from City Club meetings at 6:30 pm Monday following the Friday meeting. This Friday's topic: "Back to the Future With the Streetcar" with Bob Krebs, former ODOT intercity rail coordinator.

• Last week we wrote about **O.U.R. Federal Credit Union** going into federal conservatorship. After we went to press we heard back from the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) and were told the agency was not at liberty to talk about specific problems at O.U.R. beyond the prepared statement that went out June 24. We have learned, however, that the federal team sent in is now auditing the credit union for poor management (such as alleged improper loans, excessive overhead, poor bookkeeping, inadequate reporting, etc.) and also for possible criminal activity. The FBI will further investigate any suspected illegal shenanigans.

We hope O.U.R. just needs a tune-up and some new parts and will continue to roll out its unique and valuable services for decades to come. If it does dissolve (all of its 2,184 accounts are insured), we would like to see NEDCO or some other local nonprofit fill in the gaps. The need for basic bank account services, financial education and small business start-up loans is now greater than ever.

• **Raise the debt limit?** It was a housekeeping vote seven times in the George W. Bush administration, but now the radical GOP leadership is fearful of its Tea Party base and is unwilling to even eliminate the outrageous tax credits and loopholes used by billionaires to support their lavish mansions, jets and overseas investments. As President Obama and Gov. Kitzhaber have discovered, tax reform is extremely difficult because every tax credit comes with a built-in lobby and paid-off lawmakers.

The Republican anti-tax rhetoric is really a smokescreen for another agenda: dismantling public education, social services, entitlements and environmental regulations. All these things get in the way of prosperity, according to those who want to "take back America from the socialists." But conservatives would be wise to heed the growing gap between the rich and poor. Throughout history, when the rich arrogantly oppressed too many people, the peasants at some point grabbed their pitchforks and stormed the castles. The equivalent today would be a huge backlash at the polls.

ACTIVIST ALERT

• **Streetcars** will be the topic at City Club of Eugene at 11:45 am Friday, July 15, at the Hilton. Bob Krebs, former ODOT intercity rail coordinator, will speak and a representative of United Streetcar LLC of Clackamas will also attend.

• Planned Parenthood's **Birds and the Bees Garden Party** fundraiser with live music and food is from 5 to 8 pm Friday, July 15 at a location to be announced. Suggested donation is \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids. Purchase tickets at <http://wkly.ws/12y>

• The next volunteer clean-up at **Civic Stadium** will be from 10 am to noon Saturday, July 16. Bring hand tools, gloves and water.

• **MoveOn** is helping organize at least four local meetings in private homes Sunday, July 17 in its

campaign called Rebuild the Dream. "The American Dream used to mean something in this country," reads the email campaign message. "That if you put in a hard day's work, you could expect good American wages, benefits, a dignified retirement, and a better life for your kids. Everyone wasn't in the middle class, but everyone believed that — given a fair shot — they could make it there. That's the American Dream I'm fighting for." Information on the location of Eugene-area meetings and how many people have signed up for each one can be found at <http://wkly.ws/12v> and people can also sign up to host their own meetings.

• **Lane County Democrats** are holding their eighth annual Chili Cook-Off competition from noon to 3 pm Sunday, July 17, at Alton Baker Park Picnic Shelter #2. Live entertainment, food, raffle prizes, all for \$5

suggested donation. Contact cronin@uoregon.edu or call (503) 927-8189. The next monthly meeting of the Lane County Democrats will be at 6:30 pm Thursday, July 21, at EWEB. Contact chair@dplc.org or call 484-5099. Dems will also be celebrating Obama's 50th birthday from 5 to 8 pm Thursday, Aug. 4, at an open house for their new offices at 228 E. 11th Ave. in Eugene. Find the DPLC newsletter at <http://wkly.ws/12x>

• A free talk on "**The Evolution of LEED**" will be from noon to 1 pm Tuesday, July 19, at the Eugene Downtown Library Tykeson Room. The next major revision of the green building rating system is due out in 2012. Speaker is Gabe Cross of New Axiom, LLC. RSVP to eugene@cascadiagbc.org or call Jenna at 682-5541.