

# news Briefs

## EUGENE BETTER THAN OTHERS IN GREAT RECESSION

In the "Great Recession," Eugene is doing better than the nation, the state or the county. Why?

Mayor Kitty Piercy noted in her State of the City address last week that while local unemployment numbers are still "way too high," Eugene's 10.5 percent rate is slightly better than the nation at 10.8 percent, the state at 12.7 percent and the county at 12.8 percent.

The comparative employment advantage of Eugene over the nation represents a big turnaround. A decade ago the unemployment rate in Eugene was about a third higher than the nation, although both numbers were about half of today's unemployment rates.

So why is Eugene now doing better than the nation at providing jobs? Buried in a 200-page just-released audited annual financial report on the city, a section analyzing the local economy offers an explanation.

The report notes that government jobs and people moving here, mostly from California, have historically provided "the two pillars" that have kept Eugene's economy relatively stable. In the recession the in-migration that helped Eugene diversify away from logging has slowed significantly, but public sector jobs have grown.

From 2001 to 2009 government jobs increased 12 percent in Eugene, largely due to the UO, according to the financial report. The UO has a record enrollment approaching

24,000, provides 4,000 local jobs and has an estimated economic impact on the local economy of \$1.97 billion.

While dwindling in-migration and the mortgage crisis have cut jobs in building housing, government construction has helped mitigate the unemployment impact. The report lists recent UO projects including the \$200 million Matt Knight Arena completed a year ago, a \$65 million science building now under way and a \$72 million new residence hall scheduled for completion this fall.

The city of Eugene has also spurred construction downturn by subsidizing projects including: a \$55 million LCC classroom and dorm building across from the library, and three new office, retail and apartment buildings and remodels at Broadway and Willamette, the report notes.

Additional employment has come from the growth of Eugene as a regional healthcare provider with a 24 percent increase in health jobs since 2001, the financial report said. Also, railroad projects including plans by Union Pacific to spend \$34 million to improve the Eugene rail yard and rail line to Oakridge provide even more jobs.

So what about all the local conservatives that bash Eugene as bad for business? They're wrong.

Ward Beck emailed the mayor last month blaming the city for a GMAC call center leaving his building. Beck sold the building on Country Club Road to the city for a new police station. But he wrote, the city has a "very myopic view that quality of life will always trump a business-friendly environment."

Jack Roberts, a former Republican candidate for governor who now runs the job-recruiting Lane Metro Partnership, emailed back disputing Beck's claims. Roberts noted that GMAC didn't complain about the business climate and said they were leaving for the Philippines for cheaper labor, similar to other companies that have left the area. "It has not been my experience that businesses who are here are leaving because of the local business climate," Roberts wrote. — Alan Pittman

## STATE OF THE CITY

Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy delivered a sober assessment of the State of the City last week in an address at the Hult Center.

"I'd like to be here tonight telling you that things will be much in better in 2012," Piercy said. "But, in truth, the uncertain financial forecast continues to impact every government and every household. No matter what I read or who I listen to, the news isn't very good."

"Economists tell us that by 2020, we still will not be back to where we were before the recession," Piercy said. Eugene's 10.5 percent unemployment rate is "slightly better than the nation" but still "way too high," she said.

But Piercy touted \$43 million in road repairs "providing 495 well-paying jobs" and 450 jobs from \$100 million in new development in Eugene's long-struggling downtown. The downtown projects include the historic remodel of the Centre Court building, the Woolworth building in the former Aster pit, the new LCC downtown center and 200 units of student dorms in the former Sears pit, the Inn at 5th, the renovation of the Taco Time building "and more to come," Piercy said.

Piercy praised the police department for handling the Occupy Eugene protests in a cooperative and compassionate way that "prevented conflict and saved resources."

Despite taxpayers struggling to make ends meet in the recession, "It is likely we'll be asking you to support another road bond in the future," Piercy said.

Piercy said the community benefits from a strong transit system and noted the new bike and pedestrian plan's calls for increasing those modes. "There's strong interest in developing bike lanes that are completely separated from traffic so that all riders can feel safer moving around the community," she said.

The mayor called for unity and optimism. "We must step beyond the national political rancor, step beyond the

Full bicycle access to great dining and retail!

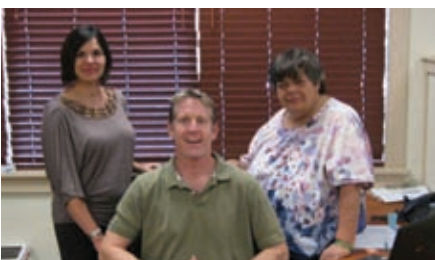
## Cycling on S. Willamette

Willamette St. from 24th to 29th Ave. will get a makeover. We envision a future with direct bicycle access "to" businesses on Willamette St. not simply a "detour" route around the area. It's important to speak up now to ensure bike lanes: patricia.thomas@ci.eugene.or.us • www.eugene-or.gov/SWillamette • 541-682-5561

 Silky Ibex Merino wool layers!  
2705 Willamette St • 541.484.5410  
M-W-Th-F 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5  
• Eugene/Springfield & Lane Co. bike maps •

**arriving by bike™**  
Urban Cycling Outfitters

## Do You Qualify for Your Oregon Medical Marijuana Card ?



- Weekly Clinics
  - Professional and Private Setting
  - Free Record Review
  - New Patients and Renewals Welcome
- office hours  
10am - 5pm  
Monday thru Friday.

Call Today **1-888-920-6076**

 **Northwest**  
Alternative Health  
Your OMMPC Advocate

**www.OMMPCard.com**

Northwest Alternative Health is now serving the Greater Eugene Area

GET LUCKY AT

 **LAUGHING PLANET**

**\$7 BURRITO & MICRO BREW**

**7:00 PM UNTIL CLOSE**

**7 DAYS A WEEK**

**A HELL OF A DEAL**

OFFER GOOD FOR DINE-IN CUSTOMERS ONLY. OFFER GOOD FOR ONE PERSON, PER VISIT, PER DAY.

2864 WILLAMETTE ST. (541) 505-5399 OPEN EVERYDAY 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM  
760 BLAIR BLVD. (541) 868-0668 OPEN SUN + MON 11AM - 9PM, TUE - SAT 11AM - 10PM  
127 NW 2ND ST. CORVALLIS (541) 286-4048 OPEN EVERYDAY 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM

**www.LAUGHINGPLANETCAFE.com**