

• **We have ranted for years** about better connecting the UO and downtown, about encouraging infill rather than pushing out the urban growth boundary (UGB), about education being Eugene and Springfield's premier industry. So, moment of truth: In spite of objections, mostly from the left, we still support the Capstone project, high-end housing for as many as 1,200 students on the old Eugene Hospital and Clinic site on Willamette Street. Lots of valid issues are bubbling up. Too big? Bad design? Too much parking? Too far from campus? Adequate staffing to oversee student behavior? Need for more cops on the streets? Too big a rush for construction?

Most of us have lived in or near "student ghettos" in Eugene, but downtown is still desperate for the energy and commerce those young men and women, plus 250 from the LCC downtown campus, would bring.

But, we're not convinced that this Colorado corporation should receive a 10-year tax exemption from the rest of us to build what they surely intend to be a profitable venture. *The Oregonian* recently wrote a front-page story on news we broke a year ago – Pat Kilkenny, former UO athlete director, and other investors can expect to make big profits from the huge student apartments they built next to Matt Arena, without a tax break from the city. Granted, demolition was not a big cost for those projects.

Finally, informed citizens of all political stripes are now opposing subsidies in the form of tax breaks. Is capitalism all about risk and reward, or is it about subsidized profits? It's time for the Eugene City Council to say "no" to 10 years of tax breaks even if it kills the project. If that happens, somebody else will come along to develop that prime site.

• City Manager Jon Ruiz rolled out his recommendations on **Envision Eugene** last week after we went to press, and we were a little surprised that he did not call for an even larger expansion of our UGB. We predicted that the clash of pro-sprawl and no-sprawl interests on the Community Resource Group and its Technical Resource Group would lead to a "compromise" involving some expansion and some infill, but Ruiz tells us his recommendations are not a compromise, but rather are based on a robust analysis of what can be done with just about every vacant and underdeveloped property within the city limits – including parcels that had been left out of the flawed Eugene Comprehensive Lands Assessment of 2010.

Now the clock is running. Residents will have less than two months to get up to speed and attend hearings, testify and lobby for or against the manager's recommendations before the City Council takes action. Do we pave over another 350 acres of our precious farmland, as the manager suggests, or do we grow in and up and use our farmland for local food production? What kind of city do we really want to be? Eugene has 3,852 people per square mile, Portland has 4,288. Vancouver, B.C., with its huge waterfront parks and mixed-use neighborhoods is considered one of the greenest and most livable cities in the world. Its population density is 13,590 per square mile. See Activist Alert for upcoming meetings.

• People getting **busted by Eugene police** for minor offenses often find themselves unprepared when they go before a judge in Municipal Court. It helps if they can do fact-finding to know what the evidence is against them, a process called discovery. Police officers have not been forthcoming about rights of discovery, until now. Thanks to pressure from local activists, EPD is now handing out a flyer showing defendants how to request information from the city prosecutor's office regarding the cases against them. Kudos to the folks who made this happen.

• **Just when we thought Springfield** was getting pretty cool, we see the city caught up in a squabble over how the U.S. flag is portrayed in a school mural, along with a Mexican flag and others. Why is anyone taking this seriously? We suppose it's all about patriotically defending our country (represented by our flag) from perceived threats, such as immigration (represented by the Mexican flag). George Bernard Shaw once wrote: "Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it."

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com







Envision Eugene

Draft Recommendation

Community presentations and discussions about the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and strategies to help Eugene grow smarter over the next 20 years.

Pick a date & place that works for you:

From 6:00 to 8:00 pm:

March 20 – Petersen Barn

March 22 – North Eugene High School

April 3 – Churchill High School

April 5 – The Studio at the Hult Center

April 10 – Sheldon Community Center

April 12 – South Eugene High School

www.EnvisionEugene.org

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