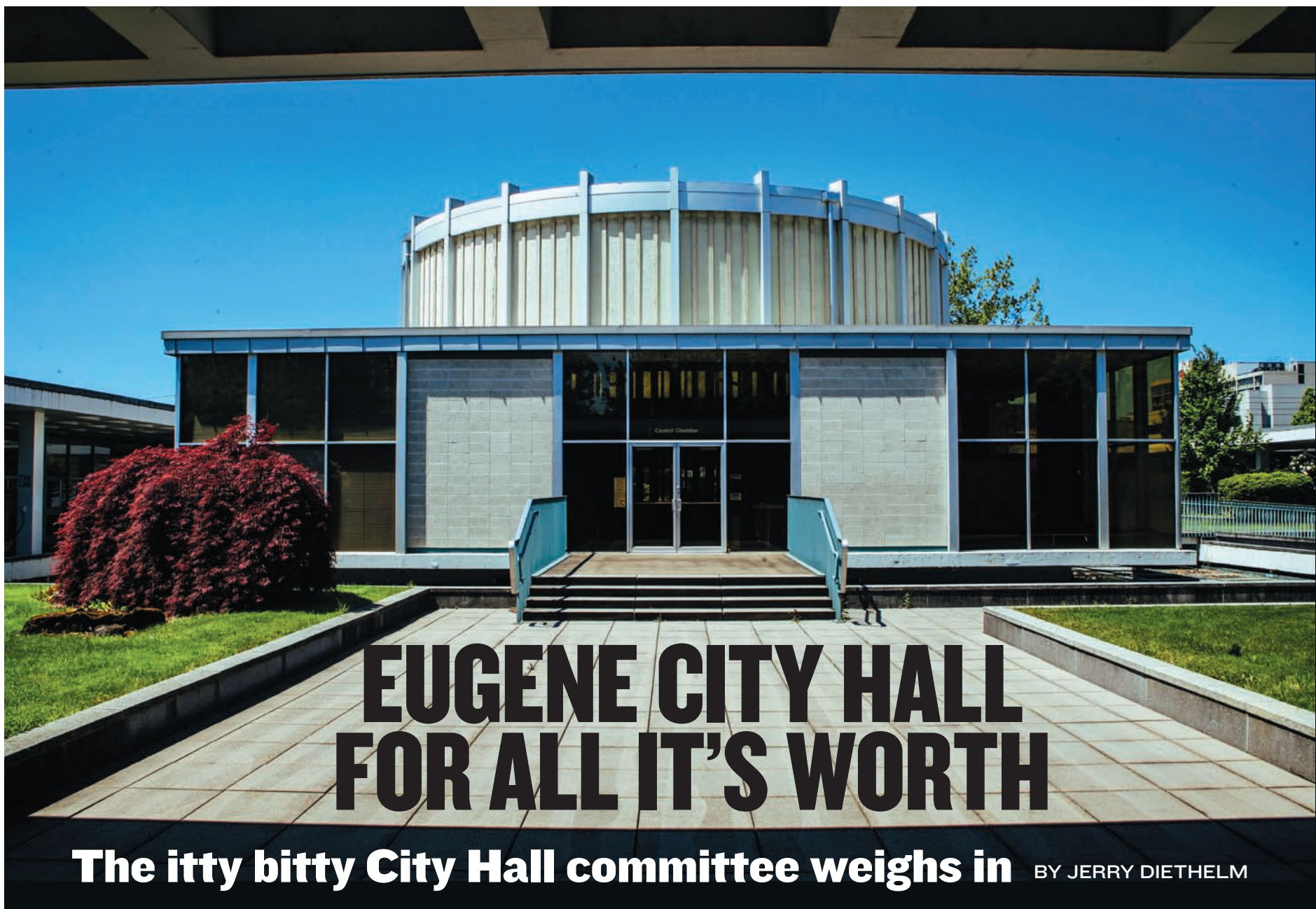




SO WHAT'S IT WORTH?

New wrinkles have been raised about the razing of the old Eugene City Hall and the present proposal that would build anew. Architect Otto Poticha has offered to purchase an option on the old building and site. On the other hand, the city of Eugene and Lane County have announced a plan to swap part of the land where City Hall now stands for Lane County's "butterfly lot."

It looks like another round of downtown area planning is needed to put these issues being raised together in the context of a broader downtown vision. The time is — if anything — overripe for reviewing and renewing that vision and for furthering its goals through all the major projects that are simmering downtown.

Adding to the existing concerns I've outlined in two previous "Design Matters" columns (*EW* 3/6, 3/20), three Eugene architects have recently come before the City Council with serious reservations about the present proposal that would demolish the existing building, fill and cover the majority of the site with a parking lot and build a small one- or two-story building along the north side of 8th Avenue.

All three architects have testified that they're particularly concerned about losing the repurposing potential and value of the existing City Hall. And since a repurposed building would require an alternate location for the new building, it has been suggested that the city-owned quarter block across 8th Avenue be considered. All three point out the bad precedent the city would be setting if it went against its own downtown plan, which forbids the construction of low-density buildings and on-grade parking.

The good news is that 40 years after renewal, downtown is alive again and the tide of the local economy is on the rise. There are bold new projects blooming and bold new prospects springing. Taking time out for some second looks at the concerns raised and at a few more "and then whats" seems like the prudent thing to do.

After all, the main object is to get the planning just right

— locating and replacing a City Hall happens about once every 50 years.

SO WHAT ARE THEY ADVISING?

Architect Bill Seider says that the present plan could be a serious waste of a key opportunity. "I just believe that tearing down the existing City Hall building to make way for a small two-story building and a three-fourths

block surface parking lot at the governmental center of our downtown is a waste of potential and sends the wrong message to other developers of downtown properties," Seider says.

He adds, "I understand that the existing City Hall building has its drawbacks and limitations." But he says that these issues have only been compared to its use as another city hall. Seider says that tearing the City Hall

