



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF EUGENE CITY HALL

PHOTO BY: JON CHRISTOPHER MEYERS PHOTOGRAPHY

A Partial City Hall

COUNCIL MAJORITY IGNORES THE BIGGER PICTURE

Councilor Alan Zelenka's Oct. 16 Viewpoint was a good summary of the Eugene City Council majority's rationalizations about tearing down and replacing City Hall. The smaller building would be more energy efficient. We wouldn't need to consolidate city services in the future at City Hall because no one was complaining and people were getting used to running around town.

We didn't need to factor in the continuing cost of rent and utilities, presently at \$1.2 million per year, for space that now houses those services. It was OK to tear down the old building and a block of valuable structured parking before there was a firm site plan and a real budget for the leveled block. As a substitute for good planning, Zelenka offered hope that something good would turn up to happen there. Maybe a future courthouse? Maybe something?

It was clear that he and his supporters had closed their minds to the many important advantages of rebuilding that were brought before the City Council by a group of expert citizens, who would instead remodel

and rebuild the present City Hall. And now that the old blistered cedar fins are down, some of that promise and potential is showing through.

I think it's important to say again that Zelenka's replacement City Hall is only a partial City Hall. It would house few services for the community. What we are getting under his leadership is a council chamber, a meeting room and offices for the mayor, the councilors, the city manager and manager's staff, and a shelled-in fourth floor for some city services in the future. I believe it's important to bring back the majority of city departments to one location. That would accomplish, using his terms, a City Hall that was accessible, functional and a center of community.

Without a consolidating (and costly) second phase to the present proposal, all we are getting is an administrative or ceremonial center that covers 8 percent of an entire city block. By not tearing down the existing building, parking and council chamber structure, we'd have a second phase in reserve — space that could incrementally accommodate returned services.

Zelenka and his colleagues are too willing to ignore this problem and simply do as all politicians do, "kick the can down the road" for our future leaders to contend with.

Sorry, but I continue to think we need smarter and better planning.

Otto P. Poticha, FAIA, is a Eugene architect and member of Save City Hall. More photos of City Hall with its façade removed can be found on our website.

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