

When my taxes go towards life-affirming ventures I will gladly pay all of them. Until then I will direct some of my tax money each year to organizations that have a positive influence on the world. This year I am redirecting my resisted taxes to the local organizations Community Alliance of Lane County, Sponsors, Occupy Medical, ShelterCare and 4J School District.

Sue Barnhart
Eugene

WHOLE FOODS STUPIDITY

Are you freakin' kidding me?! A Whole Foods store downtown? How is this uncontroversial? In Biz Beat last week [4/9], "the new store downtown that will take up

one full block near The Shedd Institute at 8th and Broadway. Two buildings on the site will come down and the new store of about 38,000 square feet is expected to open in March 2016. This project has been relatively uncontroversial."

What an idiotic plan this is! Bring in yet *more* auto traffic to the downtown area, clogging up the narrow streets designed for pedestrians and bicycles, adding *more noise* to an already cacophonous town that once was a lot quieter?

Stupid, stupid, stupid. I'm disappointed in you, city of Eugene, for allowing this. And Whole Foods is a big corporation, too. I once held the belief that Eugene was sustained by its small businesses — which is why I moved here. Anyone else getting

the impression that it's being taken over by big money? I am. Sigh.

Amber Noone
Eugene

A CIVIC TREASURE

Unbelievable! Our Civic Stadium has been saved for our kids and theirs and the city has gained a special treasure. I can just imagine the fun and healthy recreation that will take place in this community center, and we owe a great deal to those with this vision for tomorrow's youth. A special thanks to the Johnson family. Will there be a special celebration on the field this summer?

Ruth Duemler
Eugene

BOND MEASURE SOLUTION

Most people who live in Eugene consider it to be a progressive community, and yet we lack a decent facility to house our homeless animals. County budget cuts to animal services were so seriously cut, they barely exist.

It is appalling that the First Avenue Shelter does not adequately provide nearly enough space or shelter — the building is a dinosaur. The staff and volunteers are terrific, but the facility is so antiquated it is depressing and shameful.

Eugene desperately needs a new public shelter centrally located and with room to expand for future needs. Greenhill should have zero involvement in a public shelter.

DESIGN MATTERS BY JERRY DIETHELM

Playing Offense at Kesey Square

ADAPTING A PUBLIC SPACE FOR PEOPLE, NOT AGAINST PEOPLE

What is there about Kesey Square that needs fixing? It depends on whom you ask. Even the little bird sitting on Ken Kesey's shoulder knows that there has long been a desire by those concerned with the need to improve the pedestrian and shopping experience downtown to fill up the space with a new building. Theirs is a defensive point of view. They see the square's present clientele as a public nuisance that seriously detracts from their shopping mall ideal. Filling in the square would move that problem to somewhere else.

Those who value and would improve the publicness of our downtown tend to see the situation differently. They worry about losing any of our present inadequate supply of downtown park and open space. The newest projects downtown, the large Capstone and LCC housing projects, certainly didn't provide any. At Capstone, the sidewalks are so narrow that in some places pedestrians are pressed up against adjoining streets. LCC's orientation, too, is completely inward.

For them, any serious downtown park and open space planning is hovering in suspended animation. They see funding for the existing Parks Blocks Master Plan and the reclaiming of the butterfly parking garage's North Park Block site as at best a distant hope. They perceive the present attitude to public space downtown as fearful, antisocial and wall-it-in medieval, and so their attitude is reflective of Ken Kesey's "Never give an inch."

But the times for both, "they are a changing." A downtown population of 2,000 is about to become 4,000, full of fledgling young adults eager to enjoy and mark their new home territory. As they begin to spread out, more youth-supporting public spaces will be needed, not less. The times "they are a calling" for the changing of attitudes toward downtown open space from defense to offense.

And Kesey Square will need to be designed for this new role. Not redesigned, because the present space is really just a cobbling together of serial leftovers from the mall era. It was never actually designed to be a successful public place and as such has some serious flaws.

More than anything else, it's the blank brick walls of the adjoining buildings that make up the square's two dead sides that are holding it back. In any other square

in any other city in the world, those sides would be alive with penetrations and connections between the square's outdoor spaces and the activities and services of the interiors beyond.

At the ground level those commercial activities would spill out into the square. People would be sitting at tables under glass and under colored canvas where there is room enough, unlike the sides of Eugene's too narrow sidewalks. They would be having continental breakfasts or an afternoon drink, busy attending to the mating rituals of the weekend dance, listening to a concert or performance, or just sitting under cover, having intimate and profound conversations late into the night (just like in a real city).

And windows and balconies on the upper floors would be alive with light and the watchful eyes of people on the space below.

Fixing the square will mean moving Peter Helzer's fine Kesey sculpture out of the center of the space toward the intersection to create a central area for dancing, performances and gatherings. The space will need to be fully teched-up for sound and lighting and wi-fi.

And the food carts will be able to move back to serving foot traffic along Willamette Street or over to South Park Street to support fair weather lunches in the South Park Block and the Saturday Market.

Playing open space offense downtown means designing it *for* people, not *against* them. Conceiving of the square as actively including the two buildings that create it is *the* necessary conceptual transformation. It opens up new business opportunities for the lucky building owners. But even more, the expanded square idea opens up the possibility of turning an underperforming public open space into a potentially successful public/private partnership and civic asset. Such fresh thinking might even become addictive.

And it's not just the younger crowd that will benefit. Some will remember two-time presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson's response when asked what he would do in retirement. He replied, "I'll sit on the terrace with a glass of red wine and watch the young people dance." ■

Jerry Diethelm is a Eugene architect, landscape architect and planning and urban design consultant.



OVERHEAD VIEW OF KESEY SQUARE