

PUBLIC BONFIRE NEEDED

Each morning as I ride the bus to downtown, it takes me through the center of the Capstone project. Almost every morning, including some recent ones where a burn ban is in effect and, memorably, when the Egan Warming Center was shut, there is a gas bonfire burning in an empty courtyard that is gated off from the public. No one who really needs to stay warm could access it even if they wanted to. In my mind it has become symbolic of the taxes that I, as a lucky homeowner, get to pay to support this city.

I would like to propose that if the city is indirectly funding activities like this through MUPTE already, it's not a stretch to suggest that they should directly fund a public access bonfire like the inaccessible one in the courtyard (perhaps in Kesey Square). This would reduce the hypocrisy that is evident, provide people with a place to gather and warm up, and show a modicum of caring for the citizens of the community who are not moneyed developers. After all, when City Hall is complete, the city won't have to rent office space at above-market prices anymore, and I bet none of those extra funds will go to the library. Why not just suit actions to words and burn the anticipated excess, but

in such a way that it can benefit the people who need it most?

Ariana White
Eugene

IN DEFENSE OF SWSAZ

As longtime south Eugene residents, we'd like to voice our support for the proposed South Willamette Special Area Zone (SWSAZ). This proposal, in fact, protects and enhances neighborhood character.

The existing code allows 11-story buildings right up to the sidewalk with no room for street trees or a wider sidewalk. The SWSAZ decreases the allowable building height for the majority of properties along South Willamette Street and 29th Avenue and requires wider sidewalks and street trees. So, density is decreased over what is currently allowed and the pedestrian experience is improved.

Similarly, the existing code does not prevent new developments that could be similar in quality (or lack thereof) to the Capstone buildings. The SWSAZ requires better building materials and stricter design standards.

Density increases are few and new developments, for the most part, will feel more like the new Lucia development across from Friendly Street Market — a

beautiful addition to the neighborhood. The Cascade Manor vicinity will potentially see higher density. That welcomes seniors to continue living in the core of town, which is a good thing.

Anyone interested in the project should watch the Oct. 21 City Council work session online to better understand the actual proposal.

Anya Dobrowolski & Andrew Jensen
College Hill, Eugene

EXPEDITE INFILL

What does designation of a state and city housing emergency mean in terms of policy action? Not much, apparently. Here are some suggestions:

- Remove obstacles (annexation fees, code limitations) and provide incentives (tax exemptions) for property owners to add small rental housing units to their property. We could easily add thousands of affordable rentals, increase density and help homeowners stay in their houses at the same time!

- Fast-track affordable housing projects. A current project proposed for River Road will take years to complete. A state of emergency should expedite these projects and get 10 more in the works. I recently had the opportunity to visit three low-income housing developments in Eugene and was very impressed with the design

of the homes that includes solar energy, gardens, community space and programs.

"Safe spots," Conestoga huts, dusk-to-dawn are not solutions. They are Band-Aids. We can do this, people. It is a matter of political will and respect for humanity.

Clare Strawn
Eugene

EXPAND LEGAL CAMPING

During this time of heightened awareness and compassion, thousands of community members turned out to participate in Egan Warming Center trainings and town halls on homelessness. We see the tremendous need for safe shelter in the community and want to help.

Faith communities, businesses, nonprofits and government offices can help through participation in the Overnight Parking Program (OPP), giving those living in their cars a safe, legal spot to park and sleep at night. The OPP provides camper screening/placement, sanitation and trash pick-up, and parking site management by St. Vincent de Paul at no cost to the host.

Hundreds are on the active wait list for the OPP. If enough organizations participated, then the program could immediately help many families and individuals stabilize their lives and gain better access to services and employment.

VIEWPOINT BY JOSH PURVIS

Expanding the Dialogue

WE CAN EXPECT MORE OUT OF KESEY SQUARE

As programmer of the summer film screenings and the All Hallows' Eugene downtown Halloween event that attract "students, families, Eugeneans of all stripes" ("A Sense of Place" cover story, 11/19), I do not endorse or support any anti-development effort toward Kesey Square. Broadway Plaza is not a well-utilized public space. Instead, it is a remnant of failed urban planning whose greatest defenders lack the imagination and determination to champion a better-conceived common area for political and cultural activity.

The proposal by John Rowell, Greg Brokaw, Kazem Oveiss, Mark Miksis, Hugh Prichard and Harris Hoffman to build apartments and ground floor retail on Broadway Plaza has merit and deserves unbiased consideration, as does the plan submitted by Ali Emami to expand upon the current design and "encourage traffic through the square." Both proposals will require transparent and careful review, as Rowell, Brokaw, Oveiss and Emami are all downtown business owners whose investments in the area's redevelopment go beyond civic pride.

To their credit, Rowell, Oveiss, Miksis and team organized a public forum and shared design plans with various development committees to earn community support for their proposal. Emami, though, has yet to circulate a thorough overview of his plan to the numerous stakeholder groups steering downtown's revitalization efforts, including the Downtown Eugene Merchants (DEM), Downtown Eugene Economic Development (DEED) and Downtown Eugene, Incorporated (DEI). If he truly wishes to open up

the walls flanking Kesey Square to activate the space, I hope he also will cultivate relationships with his neighbors to help infuse the surrounding area with commercial and community activity.

Alex Cipolle has opened a door for the *Eugene Weekly's* editorial team to participate in a proactive conversation on how best to sustain downtown's current momentum. There is an opportunity for Editor Ted Taylor, Associate Editor Camilla Mortensen and others at the *Weekly* to join representatives of DEM, DEED, DEI, Downtown Neighborhood Association, Lane Community College, Technology Association of Oregon, Lane Workforce Partnership and the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce to discuss not only how to redevelop Kesey Square, but also how to increase living-wage jobs, how to increase funding and support for the arts, how to improve access to social services for those in need and how to further stimulate innovation and investment in our downtown.

I applaud the *Weekly's* efforts to encourage its readership to participate in the well-attended Downtown Solutions Forum organized by the mayor and city staff



to generate ideas for improving our public spaces. With the increasing level of commercial and cultural activity regularly attracting students, shoppers, designers, merchants, artists, makers, professors, families and travelers downtown, it was inspiring to see representatives from neighborhood restaurants, arts and culture venues, shops, offices, schools, residences and social services engage in a proactive conversation about encouraging natural surveillance, civic engagement and community cohesion.

For a city that prides itself on civic responsibility and virtue, we should expect more out of a political, social and cultural arena than Kesey Square. Allowing Broadway Plaza to remain a lackadaisical reminder of a generation in its twilight is not only unacceptable, it's irresponsible. Our youth deserve better examples of a public sphere that actually, and not idealistically, supports the greater good.

Joshua Purvis manages events and promotions for the Bijou Cinemas, coordinates events for Technology Association of Oregon in Eugene, teaches acting at LCC and is founder and executive director of the Eugene Film Society. Additionally, he serves on multiple downtown Eugene development committees and volunteers at the Eugene Mission. He previously served as an AmeriCorps Member and Fulbright Scholar.