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## DOES CITY HALL NEED A REDESIGN?

As Eugene's downtown continues to thrive, it's easy to forget that only a couple years ago the urban core was widely regarded as lacking a sense of place. It was a downtown without being a downtown center.

More recently, Eugene has been a city and a downtown without a City Hall, ever since the City Council approved demolishing its central public building in 2014.

In mid-December, the council voted to move toward locating a new phase one of City Hall, housing the mayor, city manager's offices and council chambers, on the north portion of the county's "butterfly lot" at Eighth Avenue and Oak Street. The council also approved negotiating with Lane County to buy that lot and sell the current City Hall site to the county for a courthouse.

In late December, the city announced plans to put \$8.7 million from a Comcast payment toward a new City Hall, boosting the budget considerably from its current \$18.75 million to nearly \$27.5 million.

About \$4 million has already gone to designing the new City Hall. With the potential move to a new location, some wonder whether there should also be a new design.

Scott Clarke of Pivot Architecture, speaking as a member of the Committee on Local Affairs of the Southwestern Oregon chapter of the American Institute of Architects, says that the issue of City Hall's design is something that is on the group's radar.

Clarke says building designs are site specific, and moving the structure just two blocks puts City Hall in a different context than it was originally designed for. "It's best to stop and take stock of the new site and make sure the building is responsive to it," he says.

But, Clarke clarifies, while it's important to reconsider the design based on a change of site, "everything learned about the project is still valuable." He says that, should there be a new design, the community values and character and nature of what the city is looking for in a building will have been worked through, and there are "still valid principles that can be applied."

The building "doesn't have to look like what we thought to use that information well," he says.

Architect Otto Poticha, who designed the county's Public Service Building near the old City Hall site, is less sympathetic, comparing the current Rowell Brokaw design to that of a McDonald's restaurant.

Poticha says the city should not make the mistake of deciding that the city has already spent the money on a design and then simply use that same design, "picking it up and dropping it in the new location." Instead, the city should look at the context of the butterfly lot and the Park Blocks. "We need a different building," he says, "to start over again." He adds, "The new site is very different from the old site."

Poticha not only advocates for a redesign of the phase one of City Hall. He predicts that a phase two, which would house city services rather than the more ceremonial offices, will never be built. Instead he proposes remodeling the old county courthouse, whose steel girders he says can be reinforced to current earthquake standards.

City of Eugene spokesperson Jan Bohman says, "For now the design contract is on pause. Negotiations with Lane County will occur first." She adds, however, that it is expected "that some additional design work would be needed if City Hall does go to the butterfly lot." ■

### Architect Otto Poticha compares the current City Hall design to a McDonald's restaurant.

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