

# slant — Not Satire

>> **This week's issue welcomes Eugene Weekly's newest columnist**, Christian Wihtol, who will cover real estate in an ongoing "Bricks and Mortar" column. Wihtol worked as an editor and writer at *The Register-Guard* in Eugene from 1990 – 2018, much of the time focusing on real estate, economic development and business. Got a real estate or business-oriented tip? Reach him at [Christian@EugeneWeekly.com](mailto:Christian@EugeneWeekly.com).

>> **Some local folks have a wild and crazy idea to try to honor local joke-book writer and icon Frog with a statue!** Three previous Eugene Saturday Market managers (Bill Goldsmith, Beth Little, Kim Still) tell us they "are working to create a durable, permanent public art memorial for David Miller, who we all knew affectionately as 'Frog' and who served as a popular cultural icon in Eugene for over 35 years." Frog died Nov. 2. The idea is for a life-sized statue located by the University of Oregon Duck Store or some other appropriate location. The goal is to raise \$25,000, "which will be used to create some kind of permanent public art piece honoring Frog's memory." Find it at [GoFund.me/a745c96d](https://GoFund.me/a745c96d).

>> **White Bird Clinic is closing its Front Rooms program before the year's end**, citing the loss of \$3.6 million in annual federal funding from President Biden's 2021 American Rescue Plan Act. The Front Rooms program provides food, warm clothing and mail delivery services for their unhoused clients. White Bird Executive Director Jeremy Gates tells *Eugene Weekly*, "The government was throwing a lot of money, and, of course, you stick your hand out and the money sticks to it." Closing the Front Rooms program is making the best of a bad situation, he says. "Here's a program that loses almost a million dollars a year that we are not legally required to have open or do, and most of the services that they offer are either duplicated within our own organization, or somewhere else," Gates says.

>> **This week in news of the true:** Satire news source *The Onion* announced that it was buying Alex Jones's right-wing conspiracy website, *InfoWars*, via a bankruptcy auction. Jones defamed the Sandy Hook families by calling the 2012 massacre of schoolchildren and educators a hoax and was ordered to pay nearly \$1.5 billion in defamation lawsuits. *The Onion* plans to turn the *InfoWars* site into a parody site. Just throwing it out there — anyone want to help *Eugene Weekly* buy Sam Bond's Garage? It's not as noble as buying *InfoWars*, but a newspaper-bar sounds like it could be fun.

>> **For those following the controversy over the proposed gravel mine near Oakridge**, opponents are holding a \*No Thanks-\*giving to Ed in front of Ed King's King Estate Winery on Territorial Highway at noon, Nov. 30. Organizers say that "the city governments of Oakridge and Westfir, the Oakridge Chamber of Commerce and the Uptown Business and Revitalization Association are united in solid opposition to this project, which threatens their air, water, economy, safety and big game, and returns nothing to their community." UBRA vice-president and Oakridge business owner Mick Garvin says, "To get all mankind on one page, marching to a common goal, you'd need invaders from Mars. To get Oakridge together, we needed Ed King." He adds, "That's not a thanks. We've beaten them back three times in the last nine years, and we will do it again." For more information on shuttles to the rally or the campaign for TV Butte, call Sabrina Ratkowski, 503-886-9489, or Mick Garvin, 541-968-4623.

>> **Nationally known writer and housing researcher Gregg Colburn will talk about solutions to homelessness** on Thursday, Nov. 21, at the 2024 Housing Summit at the University of Oregon's Ford Alumni Center. A member of the National Alliance to End Homelessness Research Council, he is co-author of *Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns*. Colburn will speak at 5:30 pm following a 4:30 pm reception; a moderated Q&A session will follow the talk. The event is free and open to the public, but tickets are required through [EventBrite.com](https://EventBrite.com).

>> **Convicted felon and President-elect Donald J. Trump handpicked Dr. Mehmet Oz, aka TV personality Dr. Oz, to run the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services** — the federal agency that runs Obamacare. This might be another one of Trump's attempts to deliver on his eight-year-old promise to dismantle Obamacare, because Oz has zero experience working in government. Another recent pick is Linda McMahon of World Wrestling Entertainment for Education secretary, which is strangely appropriate because the far-right has turned public education into a wrestling match.

# FROM EV FACTORY TO ... RV STORAGE?

*Arcimoto's Whiteaker factory, once touted as part of a climate solution, might store gas guzzlers*



BY CHRISTIAN WIHTOL

**I**n early 2020, Arcimoto executives gushed that their newly acquired factory on Chambers Street in Eugene would crank out tens of thousands of electric vehicles every year.

But a less glamorous fate may lie in store for the now-vacant complex, following Arcimoto's much-publicized implosion. A California businessman may turn the 10.6-acre industrial labyrinth into an outdoor/indoor RV, boat and general-purpose storage complex.

The businessman, Robert Ferrara, has asked city planning staff to confirm he can use the place for that, and also avoid the expense of paving and landscaping outdoor areas.

The property's current owner — Chicago-area real estate company Hilco Global — wants \$10 million for the place, which sits two blocks south of the Eugene Mission shelter.

Ferrara tells *Eugene Weekly* he is still researching the site, including its array of solar panels, and what upgrades the city might require.

"I was certainly excited by the prospect of climate-controlled self-storage powered by renewable solar power. I'm just not sure that exists on the property at this point," he says in an email.

Eugene-based Arcimoto touted the factory's EVs as a key to saving the planet. Turning it into a place to store giant toys with internal combustion engines seems a step or two down from that.

But plenty of other potential buyers, including investors and solar panel manufacturers, have looked at the property, says Tim Campbell, a Eugene commercial real estate broker who is co-listing the property.

"We've had a lot of showings of it," Campbell says. It's among the largest vacant factories in the South Willamette Valley area, he says.

Arcimoto, always strapped for cash and falling far short of its wildly optimistic sales and production goals, shut the factory in mid-2023. Nine months later it handed the place to Hilco in lieu of foreclosure. Hilco has been marketing it ever since.

On his LinkedIn page, Ferrara says he heads two Southern California ventures: one "develops, builds, owns and operates self-storage" facilities, and the other is a "nimble energy development company" that helps with power generation projects.

In his filing with the city, Ferrara says he doesn't want to have to pave or repave outdoor areas or add landscaping or stormwater filtration. "We would like to continue storing vehicles, boats, RVs without repaving the site," he writes.

The site is a hodge-podge of seven buildings totalling 204,000 square feet, including the centerpiece 153,000-square-foot main structure.

Arcimoto executives, relentlessly upbeat, in early 2021 said they needed more space than their long-time West 2nd Avenue factory/headquarters provided. So they bought the Chambers complex from its Junction City owners for \$10.25 million, according to the sale deed. Arcimoto then spent heavily on electrical, lighting, sprinkler and roofing upgrades, and then ramped up vehicle production.

But the three-wheel open-air vehicles — technically classed as motorcycles — never caught on, while Arcimoto burned through money. Trying to stay afloat, in February 2023 Arcimoto took out a \$6 million loan from Hilco, pledging the Chambers property as collateral.

By that summer, Arcimoto was trying to sell the property, but found no takers. It failed to keep up with payments to Hilco, according to deed filings. In April of this year, Arcimoto surrendered the property to Hilco.

In its marketing, Hilco stresses the site's industrial potential and the "significant renovation to modernize it for heavy manufacturing with modern power infrastructure."

The site's one disadvantage is that it consists of so many buildings, Campbell says. "Users want it all under one roof," he says.

It may be weeks before the city gives Ferrara usage and landscaping verdicts. Meantime, Arcimoto hangs on at its West 2nd factory. It does no manufacturing. Its small staff services customers' Arcimotos, and it has some used and new Arcimotos for sale. The company plans a comeback, Dwayne Lum, chief operating officer, tells *EW*.

*Christian Wihtol, Eugene Weekly's real estate columnist, worked as an editor and writer at The Register-Guard in Eugene 1990-2018, much of the time focused on real estate, economic development and business. Reach him at [Christian@EugeneWeekly.com](mailto:Christian@EugeneWeekly.com).*