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OUR VIEW

In rural Oregon, historic preservation is about survival

In the last few days, on these very pages, we have published two opposing opinions about the Main Street Revitalization Act. That's of value to the reader — to have the argument from both sides right there in front of you and allow yourself to arrive at a conclusion.

On Wednesday, we published a piece titled "Renovation tax credit would rob public schools," penned by *The Oregonian* newspaper in Portland. On Thursday, Restore Oregon responded by submitting their op-ed: "Revitalize Main Street Act would support local economies, schools."

Both made sense, from where they were coming from.

The Oregonian view is easy to see, if you are writing from a desk in Portland. The city has developers outbidding each other to spend money on land and facilities in Rose City. Long-neglected neighborhoods are being spruced up — to the detriment of some — with each new Trader Joe's and the coattail-riding coffee shops that follow. Housing prices continue their steady climb from affordable to Seattle. And of course that Portland sensibility for real things (or really ironic things) makes historical preservation pay off in the long run. Why do we need the inefficient state to get involved?

That's not the case outside of the metropolitan area, and not the case

anywhere in Eastern Oregon.

Over here, we're fighting tooth and nail to hold onto our young people, our jobs and our buildings. Some money from the state could help, and some brick-and-mortar investment can save crumbling bricks and mortar on our main streets and highways. Why won't

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the taxpayer-funded state get involved and preserve our history?

At least that's how Restore Oregon sees it.

In the grand scheme of the gargantuan state budget, we're arguing over a few pennies. While it's true that every penny counts, \$12 million per year into

a Historic Rehabilitation Fund is small enough to worry that it's not enough dollars to make a dent in the backlog of infrastructure demand that is closing in on collapse.

The proposal — in our view — is a relatively modest one that would benefit historic towns like Pendleton, Echo and Baker City, and at a negligible cost to taxpayers statewide.

In rural Oregon, our historic cities have not been built around and overshadowed by expansion that scrapes the sky and pushes against city limits. Our old, economic districts are modest — just a building or two in many places. And by giving them access to state funds for a fresh coat of paint, a whole town could become brighter.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Legislature has gone to the cats and dogs

The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times

In the early days of a legislative session, you might hear legislators talk about "cats and dogs," and it's not a reference to animals.

Rather, the phrase refers to a certain type of bill that flourishes in the first half of a session. A "cat and dog" bill tends to be on a specific and narrow topic that often is close to the heart of a particular legislator. Each session tends to generate a lot of these bills — hence the phrase "cats and dogs." Many of them are silly. Some of them generate some press coverage because they often tend to cover unusual topics.

And most of them die in the first few weeks of a session — a useful reminder that one of the important functions of a Legislature is to kill bills.

So it was surprising to learn this week that a "cat and dog" bill still is very much alive in this session — and that the bill deals with actual cats and dogs.

House Bill 3494, which passed the House of Representatives last month, would ban the declawing of cats. The bill also would ban declawing both cats and dogs. (A Senate panel is scheduled to consider the bill on Thursday.)

If the bill passes, Oregon would become the first state to ban declawing of cats, although a bill that would make declawing a crime is pending in the New York Legislature, according to a story in *The Oregonian* newspaper.

Let us get right to the point, so to speak: We generally do not believe cats

should be declawed, except under very rare circumstances. (The bill allows three exceptions: if the cat's life is at risk, if the cat's clawing poses a risk to the cat or its owner and if other efforts to curb a cat's destructiveness have failed.) We have similar reservations about declawing animals, both cats and dogs.

But we also don't think the Legislature should be in the business of mandating this issue on behalf of pet owners.

Although House Bill 3494 has attracted support from organizations such as the Oregon Humane Society, not all like-minded organizations think the bill is a good idea.

In fact, *The Oregonian* noted that a group called The Paw Project worries that the bill as currently written offers too many exceptions.

It's also possible that one unintended result of the bill might be an increase in the number of cats relinquished to shelters because of destructive clawing; it would be ironic if a bill designed to protect feline welfare ended up generating a spike in the number of cats put to death.

Finally, though, we don't see the compelling reason why legislators should get involved in the issue. At this point in the session, these "cat and dog" bills can serve as a real distraction from bigger issues. That's why these bills, as cute as they may be, are best settled in the early days of the session, not when the clock is ticking toward adjournment.



OTHER VIEWS

How adulthood happens

Every society has its rites of passage, marking the transition from youth to adulthood. Most of these rites of passage are ritualized and structured, with adult supervision and celebration. But the major rite of passage in our society is unritualized, unstructured and unnamed. Most of the people in the middle of it don't even know it is going on. It happens between ages 22 and 30.

The people who endure this rite of passage have often attended colleges where they were not taught how to work hard. As Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa write in their book "Aspiring Adults Adrift," the average student at a four-year college studies alone just over one hour per day. That is roughly half of how much students were compelled to study just a generation ago.

Meanwhile, colleges have become socially rich, stocked with student centers, student organizations, expensive gyms, concerts and activities. As Arum's and Roksa's research demonstrates, academic life is of secondary or tertiary importance to most students. Social life comes first. Students experience college as a place to meet other people and learn to build relationships.

When they leave campus, though, most of those social connections and structures are ripped away. Suddenly fresh alumni are cast out into a world almost without support organizations and compelled to hustle for themselves.

These twenty-somethings live in a world of radical freedom, flux and insecurity. Surveys show they are very pessimistic about the state of the country but amazingly optimistic about their own eventual destiny. According to the Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults, 86 percent agree with the statement, "I am confident that eventually I will get what I want out of life."

In the meantime, many spend the first few years out of college aspiring but adrift. They are largely unattached to religious institutions. Two-thirds report that they are not politically engaged. Half the students in Arum's and Roksa's recent study reported that they lacked clear goals or a sense of direction two years after graduation.

Yet they are not sure they want to rush into adulthood. As Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Elizabeth Fishel write in "Getting to 30," "The value of youth has risen, and the desirability of adulthood has dropped accordingly. Today's young people expect to reach adulthood eventually, and they expect to enjoy their adult lives, but most are in no hurry to get there."

One way they cope is by moving back



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

home. A third of the graduates in the Arum and Roksa sample were living at home, levels roughly double the share of grads living at home in the 1960s. Three-quarters of 18- to 25-year-olds who were not living at home received financial assistance from their parents. American parents provide an average of \$38,000 in assistance to their young adult children.

The first big ordeal is finding a job. Many young adults have not been given basic information about how to go about this. As my Times colleague April Lawson, 28, notes, they are often given the advice, "Follow your dream! The possibilities are limitless!" which is completely discordant with the grubby realities they face.

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They want meaningful work with social impact. They want to bring their whole selves to work and ignore the distinctions between professional and intimate life that were in the heads of earlier generations. But meaningful work is scarce. Fifty-three percent of college graduates in the Arum and Roksa sample who were in the labor force were unemployed, underemployed or making less than \$30,000 a year.

As emerging adults move from job to job, relationship to relationship and city to city, they have to figure out which of their meanderings are productive exploration and which parts are just wastes of time. This question is very confusing from the inside, and it is certainly confusing for their parents.

Yet here is the good news. By age 30, the vast majority are through it. The sheer hardness of the "Odyssey Years" teaches people to hustle. The trials and errors of the decade carve contours onto their hearts, so they learn what they love and what they don't. They develop their own internal criteria to make their own decisions. They fear what other people think less because they learn that other people are not thinking about them; they are busy thinking about themselves.

Finally, they learn to say no. After a youth dazzled by possibilities and the fear of missing out, they discover that committing to the few things you love is a sort of liberation. They piece together their mosaic.

One thing we can tell young grads and their parents is that this is normal. This phase is a thing.

It's not a sentence to a life of video games, loneliness and hangovers. It's a rite of passage that makes people strong.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Building renovation supports schools, doesn't rob them

I feel it's important to point out some of the facts that were left out of the recent Other Views column titled "Renovation tax credit would rob public schools."

I think I'll just lead with the point that property taxes support local schools, and that renovations of historic buildings increase the tax base, meaning more property tax generated for education (among other things). I don't think that qualifies as robbing public schools — in fact, it should decrease schools' reliance on state coffers. A stronger property tax base in Oregon would actually decrease the strain on the state's education funding.

My experience with commercial real estate tax assessment shows the primary influence on property taxes is how much income the property produces. I will guarantee you every appraiser you meet can attest that unoccupied second story residential that hasn't been renovated in 30-plus years drags down the value of a property.

Pendleton's downtown historic buildings are riddled with unoccupied and underutilized second story residential. Also, if it doesn't meet current code for the type of occupancy,

good luck getting the building inspector to sign off on turning it back into something other than an empty room after so many years of sitting idle. Tax credits and grants for restoring historic properties can make those unusable spaces pull their weight again.

Oregon Senate Bill 565 and other federal tax incentives for the renovation of historic buildings will not hurt funding for education and will improve funding of other local public services. Pendleton needs every hand on deck to turn financially underperforming historic buildings back into income-producing properties for their owners, which will in turn produce higher assessed values and provide more local tax revenue. This is also the goal of Urban Renewal programs, to spur private investment, grow the tax base and reduce blight.

This connection between renovating or building real property and funding our schools, city, county and public safety is often overlooked. I want everyone to know that when they see contractors working a major renovation or erecting a new building, that new tax revenue is funding our schools, infrastructure, and making sure the ambulance shows up when you need it.

Jordan McDonald
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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