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The American Institute of Architects

AIA EUGENE

2019 PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

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EUGENE: BREATHE IT IN

By Frank Visconti, AIA
AIA EUGENE Section Director

As our cities around the world continue to grow, approaches to our downtowns keep evolving. For thousands of years, urban life has been the biggest challenge for engineers and architects. Keeping people healthy, safe and prosperous is directly linked to our built environment. We are continuously evolving within the Electric Age, the Plastic Age and the Information Age. Within our lifetime, the global population has grown from 2 billion to 8 billion people. Cities are growing and the need for more housing and supportive buildings must be balanced proportionally with our energy use. We need to ensure healthy built environments for our bodies and minds, using healthy building methods that are sustainable. The process has had many twists and turns, but the arrow always pointing forward. What was Eugene's downtown like a generation ago? How is any of this decided? Are we planning for the future? Are there still risks of failure?

This year's Design Annual addresses some of these issues. For your consideration, we have included a study on the history of Eugene's Downtown Pedestrian Mall by PhD of Architecture candidate Subik Shrestha, an article on

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HEALTHY DOWNTOWNS: PARK AND PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

where Eugene is headed by Architect and Blogger Randy Nishimura and an article on the blooming and lively growth in downtown Springfield by President and CEO of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Vonnie Mikkelsen.

We also include the winners of the local AIA Eugene and ASLA People's Choice Awards for architecture and landscape design. We tallied over 3,000 votes from the public including special awards from Eugene Mayor Vinis and our fellow AIA Colleagues.

With this issue, we celebrate the quality and thoughtfulness of our local design professionals. AIA Eugene is a section of the state chapter AIA Oregon. The AIA is a national professional organization with headquarters in Washington, DC.



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WHAT HAPPENED TO EUGENE'S DOWNTOWN PEDESTIAN MALL?

Subik Shrestha, University of Oregon PhD Candidate

Eugene's Downtown Pedestrian Mall opened to the public on February 13, 1971, and lasted almost 30 years. Beginning in the 1960s at least 200 downtown areas in the USA were converted to pedestrian malls—eliminating vehicular traffic with the aim to develop walkable retail centers. It was the decade of “Urban Renewal”.

Eugene began its redevelopment as part of the urban renewal paradigm, and substantial funding was available through federal grants. Three major problems in downtown Eugene were identified to justify the substantial scope in the late 1960s— (1) the scarcity of downtown parking, (2) growing vehicular traffic congestion and, (3) many building were considered substandard. One of the major components of the program was the promise of a new retail center. It would constitute eight city block around the pedestrian mall zone.

Inspiration for Downtown Pedestrian Malls was commonly drawn from the historic cities of Europe. Suburban Pedestrian Malls were also on the rise. But those are on the outskirts of historic downtowns and can be developed all at once. One of the first Downtown Pedestrian Malls to open in the United States was the Kalamazoo Mall in Michigan (1959). Downtown Pedestrian Malls added vitality to existing urban spaces and celebrated their histories. However, it was the start of the competition between its very opposite, brand new suburban malls.

Eugene opted for the Downtown Pedestrian Mall for two primary reasons. First, during the 1960s, the success of suburban enclosed shopping centers was evident to everyone and downtown authorities wanted to find success using similar ideas. Particularly for Eugene, the pressure from the newly developed Valley River Center escalated at the end of the '60's. The city wanted to make a bold move to save downtown and increase its retail presence. Besides, Downtown Pedestrian Malls were enjoying success in other parts of the nation. A 1969 Downtown Pedestrian

Mall Brochure argued that the basic reason for any mall is “to allow pedestrians to walk back and forth freely and safely to shop. The retail core's streets will be transformed into a mix of the man-made and natural worlds.” [see figure 2 for more information on the Eugene's design]

A decade of success followed its opening. At one point during the late seventies, the retail center blocks were almost fully occupied. But during the mid-eighties, it started to suffer from high vacancy as businesses and major tenants found more incentives to move to the new voluminous buildings at the Valley River Center. Ultimately it failed and was blighted. Streets started to reopen for vehicular traffic one after the other. The first to reopen was in 1985 along Willamette street and the last section along Broadway reopened in September 2002. Sears was the last among retail giants to leave in September 1989. The opening of the street back to vehicles was symbolic of its failure. High vacancy rates with the loss of specialty stores and major retail giants were unsustainable. During its popularity, the retail center boasted at least seven large retailers including Sears, J. C. Penney, Bon Marche, Montgomery Ward, Woolworth Co., J.J. Newberry, W.T. Grant, and other large stores like the Broadway Store, Burch's shoes and Kaufman's store, among other several specialty stores [figure 2]. At its peak in 1978, there were at least seventeen apparel stores, thirteen jewelry stores, six shoe stores, in addition to seven large retailers. But then they all moved away.

There are examples of Downtown Pedestrian Malls in the United States that have survived successfully until the present. However, there were two important factors that did not favor sustainability in Eugene; (1) there weren't enough people residing close-by (lack of housing and downtown density) and (2) The Valley River Center was only 2.5 miles away—an easy 10 minute trip.

Retrospectively, there were many clues

(Continued on pg. 12)



Figure 1. Downtown Eugene and the urban renewal boundary. The major components of the CEP were a retail center, a commercial/office core, an auditorium-convention center, a motor hotel, and parking garages (source: A 1969 mall design plan/brochure released by ERA, reworked by the author).



Figure 2. Eugene's pedestrian mall and the retail center from a 1969 ERA map. The mall team included Mitchell and McArthur, landscape architects and George T. Rockrise and Associates, architects and urban planners (source: A 1969 mall design plan/brochure released by ERA, reworked by the author).

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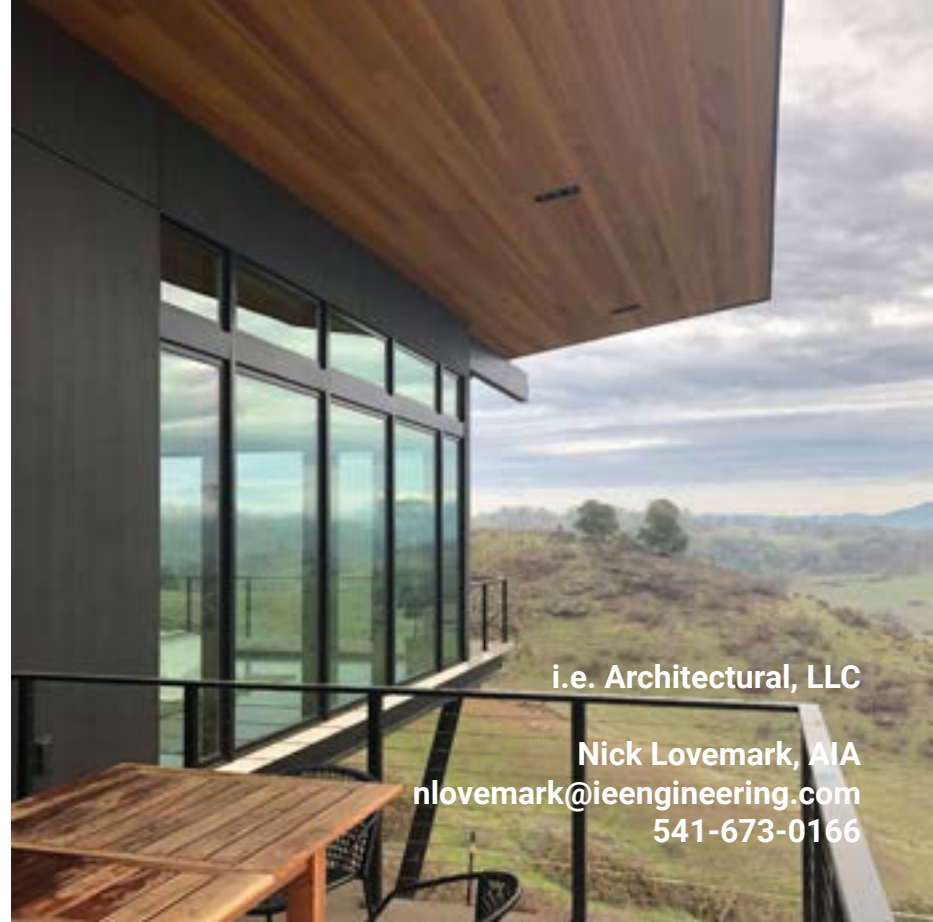


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Town Square rendering.

PRIVATE GOOD & PUBLIC SPACE

Randy Nishimura, AIA, CSI, CCS, Principal at Robertson Sherwood Architects PC

Civil interest is commonly associated in this country with individual life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Participation in the life of society is also ordinarily considered part of the “good life” envisioned by the nation’s founders. Traditionally, this has meant engaging in the community realm—its public space—to secure its benefits. Unfortunately, for much of the past century investment in our public spaces suffered from indifference and antipathy.

The presence of real public spaces is important to the existence of any civil society. So too is differentiating those spaces so they are as unique, context-specific, attractive, and meaningful as possible. Investing intellectual and monetary capital in the public realm—such as in downtown Eugene where we as a community exercise our social and civic functions—is crucial. Regardless of who makes that investment, the public realm should always remain free to use,

accessible, and welcoming to people from all walks of life.

Maximizing the public realm as a shared interest is important because it is our public spaces that most effectively differentiate here from everywhere and nowhere. In Eugene this means recognizing what makes our city’s cultural, physical, and historical context unique. It means countering the prevalent banality of Eugene’s public spaces. It means stressing the importance of physical structure and identity—the vividness of unique elements and conversely a grasp of the whole. It also means following principles of good urban form to help ensure the development of memorable, attractive public places.

A characteristic of good public spaces is no one is excluded from using them. While this isn’t always the case for the buildings that shape those public spaces, no one argues buildings don’t contribute toward the success or failure of the urban

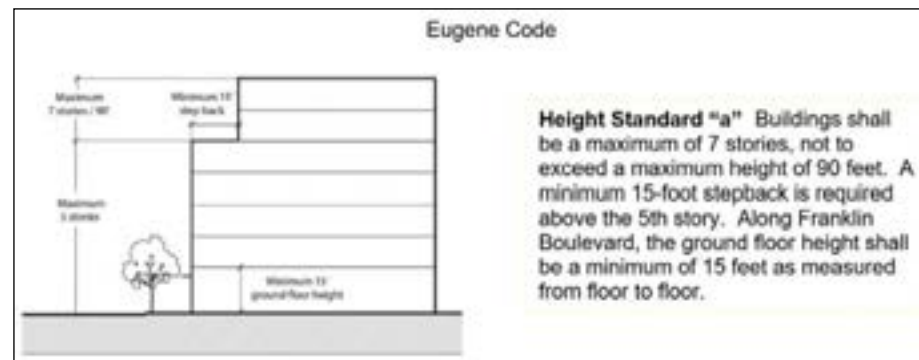
settings of which they’re a part. People recognize good public spaces when they see and experience them. Likewise, they immediately know and pointedly avoid uncomfortable and unattractive places.

We all bear the costs of negative externalities associated with poorly designed projects. These can include alienating streetscapes and the undesirable behavior that often accompanies them. Good design can make a difference. Enlightened municipalities are rewriting their land use codes to disincentivize urban

sprawl and individuals’ reliance upon the automobile, while encouraging active sidewalks, walkable neighborhoods, and vibrant mixed-use developments.

The consequences of negative externalities are one reason why form-based codes are finding increased acceptance in communities across the county. Unlike conventional zoning, form-based codes address the relationship between public and private spaces by prescribing the interaction between

(Continued on pg. 14)



An excerpt from the Walnut Station form-based code.

SPRINGFIELD EMERGING

Vonnie Mikkelsen, President and CEO, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce



ABOVE- Main Street storefronts | OPPOSITE LEFT- Downtown mural | OPPOSITE RIGHT- Public House
(Images courtesy of Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce)

Springfield is attracting enterprising, civic-minded talent, entrepreneurs and developers invested in building a community in downtown. Understanding their story and their experience is key to understanding what's happening in downtown—that youthful energy, cool vibe, and undeniable momentum.

Let's begin with the big picture. In Springfield, one finds a business-friendly culture that honors legacy industry employers, appreciates entrepreneurial enterprise, and is lighting the fire under creative industry professionals. It seems to be working quite well. Rosboro, the nation's largest producer of glulam wood products, hums along on the north end of Main Street, as does the reconstructed, state-of-the-art Swanson Mill.

A mile away in the downtown core the Wildish Theater, Emerald Arts Center, and Springfield Museum form a cultural anchor. Our previously blighted Main Street has transformed into a row of colorfully restored storefronts and sidewalks lined with flowerpots, picnic tables, and trees bearing strings of soft lights. Between 3rd and 4th Streets (recently dubbed "The Block") are some 40 renovated second-story apartments leasing at market rate. A block north, PublicHouse Hub couples a casual-chic gathering space with a hard-to-beat selection of food and drink beneath the wood beams of a former church.

Downtown is attracting business owners who are looking for more than just a place to hang their shingle; they are civically engaged and invested in building a community in downtown Springfield. Jenna Fribley, principal at local design and architectural firm Campfire Collaborative and coordinator of the Design Resource Center at 341 Main Street, says that when she and her business partner moved their office to downtown Springfield, they were excited by the opportunity to help shape and contribute to the future of Main Street and be part of something meaningful. She's a relentless force behind the downtown revitalization and describes a uniquely symbiotic relationship at play between the tangible, grassroots efforts of local businesses and developers and the behind-the-scenes facilitation by the City through long-range planning and urban renewal district investments.

Fribley would know. She has been the architect and designer behind much of the 300 Block renovations and is currently working with David Loveall of Masaka Properties on their newest venture: a boutique hotel located downtown on the site of the original Springfield Hotel in the early 1900s. She comments, "In Springfield we have a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches that have shared goals and are working in tandem with a positive spirit and a successful outcome. This isn't the case in most communities, and it feels important to celebrate that."

We're also seeing an authentic commitment to neighborly business collaboration, where the personal and relational matter. When Erin Gilfillan opened Main Street Market, a fresh and healthy-choice grocer on the 300 Block, she made a point to drop by and visit with the owners of long-time downtown Springfield business Wynant's Family Health Foods. For Gilfillan, it was important that they get to know each other as community partners and not as competitors. In downtown Springfield, that's good business.



Where relational networks are valued, we find a variety of purposeful, enterprising networks thrive. The City convenes a monthly meet-up bringing resource partners and downtown merchants together to share information as does the Chamber of Commerce which recently concluded a four-part “Meet the Developers” series highlighting development in The Washburne District, Main Street, and Glenwood. On their own initiative, creative industry professionals have come together to facilitate connections and entrepreneurial collaborations. The group found inspiration in the town’s historic center of making – the Booth Kelly Mill site - and so formed their identity brand the “Booth Kelly Makers District (BKMD).”

In the Booth Kelly Makers group, artisans find they share not only a passion for creative endeavors, but also an interest in building community. It’s a magical combination. At a recent BKMD Meetup at the Urban Lumber Company design studio, attendees included woodworkers, a glass artist, metal fabricators, a banker, an architect, a vintage automobile restorer, a software designer, a clothing designer, museum curators, and other artisans and interested community members. That night, owners Seth and Christina San Filippo brought out the wine and cheese for networking and a guided tour of their 30,000 s.f. fabrication shop where the highly skilled team at Urban Lumber Co. will custom-build just about anything out of locally salvaged timber.

Seth begins the tour with a fascinating history of Springfield, the Mill which served as the town’s lifeblood at its foundation, and effectively connects the past, present, and future to place, materials, and product. It is through Seth’s appreciation and respect for place, source, and product that one understands, this is what’s driving momentum in Springfield. The combination of creative culture, innovation, work ethic, pride in community, and a generously collaborative nature lends substance to the uniquely inspiring vibe; it draws you in.

The City seems committed to doing their part, collaborating with developers and businesses on an updated development code, promoting a business-friendly culture at City Hall, and investing in place enhancements. Rolling out soon are five commissioned crosswalk art projects and an expanded buildout of highly touted streetlighting. These improvements to the built environment enhance the total lived experience.

Springfield Planning Commission member Sophie McGinley is a twenty-something year old University of Oregon alum, and as far as we can tell now holds the distinction as the youngest woman to ever serve on the commission. McGinley had never envisioned herself as civically engaged but was inspired through a UO internship experience at the City of Springfield. As an intern, she was assigned to implement a Travel Oregon Bike-friendly Business program. She speaks firsthand of a collaborative approach to working with local businesses. She says



she witnessed city employees “authentically dedicated to collaborative problem-solving,” and adds she gained respect for the “lean and mean and get things done” culture at city hall.

Sophie, and working professionals like her, hold a front row seat to downtown revitalization. For McGinley it was a long-time dream to live above a coffee shop. Her eyes light up when she recounts the moment she learned of newly renovated apartments in a historic downtown building directly above a coffee shop that featured chic interiors with exposed brick walls. She now calls the 336 Lofts on The Block home. When asked what she likes about living downtown, her answer comes easily: access to public transit, government offices, bike-friendly trails, a variety of places to gather with friends, and the sense of safety. As for favorite spots, Main Street Market, PublicHouse, a new taqueria, and of course The Washburne Cafe. She says but for work, she rarely has the need or desire to leave her downtown neighborhood.

It seems for the foreseeable future Springfield has a working formula in place to attract talented, driven, creative, innovative, educated, hardworking, and community-minded entrepreneurial types like Sophie, Jenna, Seth, Erin, and so many more like them. I envision continuous efforts to embrace and empower enterprising endeavors and creative professionals, giving them a platform on which they bring their best and, in so doing, bring out the best in Springfield.

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2019 AIA EUGENE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD WINNERS

Each year, the American Institute of Architects, Eugene Chapter in collaboration with the Willamette Valley Section of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) sponsors the People's Choice Awards for Architecture. These awards aim to educate and inspire our fellow citizens by showcasing architecture, interiors and landscape architecture projects created by Eugene AIA members and ASLA members. The program demonstrates to the public the role of the architectural profession in enhancing the built environment. We had over 50 entries which were displayed in Downtown Eugene at the Broadway Commerce Center during Eugene's Sunday Streets event. A new dynamic display system was designed by Frank Visconti, AIA, fabricated by local millworker Advance Cabinets and required no screws or nails. We tallied well over 3,000 votes this year!



UNBUILT: David Minor Theater by Willard C. Dixon Architect



COMMERCIAL: Mahonia Mixed-Use Building by Arkin Tilt Architects



INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE: Heartfelt House by Schirmer Satre Group



INTERIORS: Mahonia Building Interiors by Nir Pearlson Architect



PUBLIC INSTITUTION: Heartfelt Guest House by 2form Architecture



SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL: Coastal Tiny Home by Nir Pearlson Architect



MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING: Amazon Corner by Rowell Brokaw Architects



RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE: The Joseph Garden by Stangeland & Associates



PUBLIC LANDSCAPE: Rockridge Park by Cameron McCarthy

2019 AIA EUGENE MAYOR'S CHOICE & COLLEAGUE'S CHOICE AWARD WINNERS

This year's AIA-Eugene Chapter annual People's Choice Awards program drew entrants across 11 categories. There were over 50 entries. In October, AIA Eugene and ASLA Willamette Valley Chapter celebrated the winners of the 2019 People's Choice Awards at an event at the Civic Winery in downtown Eugene. Mayor Vinis selected three projects as examples of excellence in design. She commented on her selections in a video that is available from the AIA Oregon website at www.aiaoregon.org.



COLLEAGUE'S CHOICE: 1203 Willamette by Rowell Brokaw Architects



MAYOR'S CHOICE AWARDS: Courtyard House by 2form Architecture



MAYOR'S CHOICE AWARDS: Blossom Cottages by Arbor South Architecture



MAYOR'S CHOICE AWARDS: The Bard by Q Sterry Inspired Architecture

Eugene's Downtown Pedestrian Mall In History And The Present
(continued from page 3)



which we can now see that could have made it sustainable. Besides increasing downtown housing density, there were four key flaws.

1. It was a rigidly planned project. The urban design plan was static and as it evolved it did not adapt to economic changes vigorously enough.
2. Pedestrians were stifled as certain areas were restricted in favor of limiting activities to the public. When the mall first opened, playing in the water at the fountain was not allowed. Pets and bicycles were also not allowed. There were few public performances and public expression was limited.
3. The retail center separated mixed uses rather than integrating them with each other creating a rental hierarchy and allowing for the domino effect once anchor stores vacated their buildings.

4. Although the City worked hard to facilitate displaced small businesses, most of them were still not able afford the leasing rates which still favored larger retailers. One of the misconceptions was that if enough large retailers (i.e., magnets, anchors) stayed, smaller specialty stores would stay as well. As the 1980s progressed, both types left downtown gradually seeking spaces in new construction with ample parking. The reliance on large retailers was risky and as soon as they left the downtown spaces, the vacancies increased exponentially.

For a city to promote a healthy downtown, it will always be a complex balance of giving incentives and reaping success. In the case of Eugene's Downtown Pedestrian Mall, the vision did not produce a sustainable solution and began to fail in 10 years. However, its organic evolution has allowed it correct itself and shine vibrantly in the present day.

Acknowledgments to my Ph.D. committee members-Howard Davis, Ocean Howell, Hajo Neis, and John Rowell at the University of Oregon.

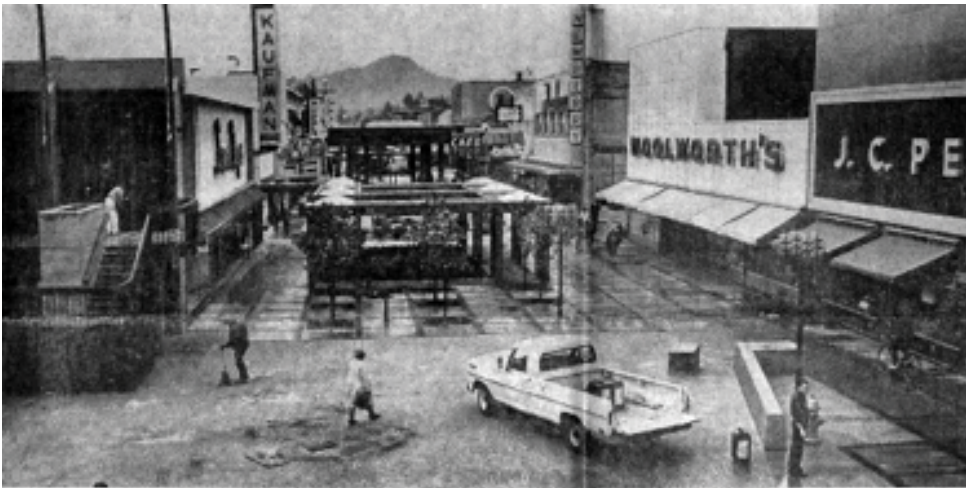


Visions of the new Mixed Use Riverfront Development (Rendering courtesy of SERA Architects)

RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL | INTERIORS



Downtown Playground (1971) (Images courtesy of the Register Guard)



Images of the mall in 1971 looking south along Willamette Street
(Images courtesy of the Register Guard)



The central fountain at Broadway Avenue and Willamette Street
(Images courtesy of the Register Guard)



AIA Eugene, ASLA members and friends celebrating a busy year at our 2019 Holiday Party at Civic Winery and Wines in Downtown Eugene.

streets and buildings in terms of form, scale, and massing. For example, a form-based code typically regulates minimum as well as maximum building heights and building setback requirements, dictates building orientation, and specifies where parking areas should be located. Advocates for form-based codes cite their ease of use. Compared to conventional zoning documents, they are typically shorter and organized for visual access and readability. Their stated purpose is the shaping of a high-quality urban realm, a presumed public good.

The City of Eugene worked with key stakeholders including local businesses, the University of Oregon, and surrounding residents to develop a form-based code for the Walnut Station node along Franklin Boulevard. Implemented as the S-WS Walnut Station Special Area Zone, the code retains aspects of a conventional land use code (such as the prohibition or segregation of certain uses), while aspiring to achieve a predictable built environment comprising quality public spaces. Time will tell if it is a success.

Form-based codes do have their detractors. Critics argue form-based codes distort real estate markets, undermine the order of a spontaneous economy, and generally are representative of public-sector meddling in the rightful business of the private sector. They do constitute a form of taxation, imposing constraints on private goods. And from the perspective of some design professionals, form-based codes are overly prescriptive, sometimes fail to address the existing community context and character, and leave too little room for design discretion and creativity.

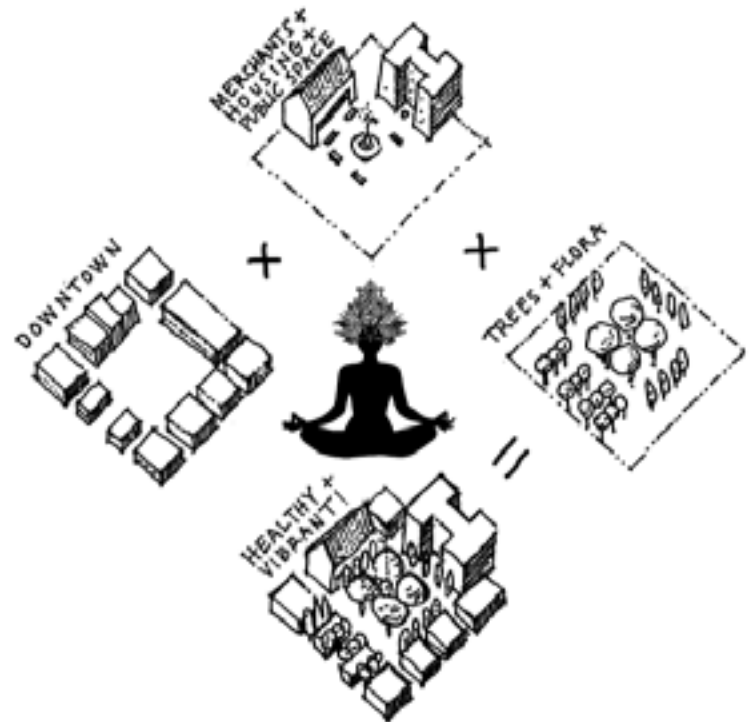
The critics' concerns have merit, but they don't acknowledge the public and private benefits form-based codes often yield. The predictable physical results of form-based codes are good for business and in the public interest. That said, it's prudent to be wary of imperfect planning tools shaped by imperfect, albeit well-intentioned, human beings. The dynamics of development and the factors that contribute to achieving a livable community will always be far too complex to effectively and flawlessly codify and regulate. Regardless, prescribing the

type of development—as opposed to doing nothing at all—is necessary if we want the right outcome for our community.

The current Town Square project in downtown Eugene may be our best opportunity yet to realize the kind of public space that favors the good life our freedom-loving forebears coveted. The project's character will be defined in part by the buildings that give it shape and by its color, texture, and complexity. The surrounding structures—the Wells Fargo Bank, Park Place Building, South Park Building, Lane County Courthouse, Smeede Hotel, Tiffany Building, the forthcoming development at 8th & Pearl, and the future Eugene City Hall—are or will be of sufficient proportions to visually contain Town Square. At the moment, those surrounding buildings mostly turn their backs toward the space. The addition of the Farmers Market pavilion and City Hall will generate a level of urban energy commensurate with Town Square's civic importance and historic significance. That energy will in turn prompt owners of the surrounding private properties to make improvements to their buildings. Ideally, these will liven the edges of Town Square and further cement it as downtown Eugene's center of gravity. The impetus to make enhancements will be a positive externality. Overall, the social benefit of those improvements will exceed whatever profits the property owners accrue.

The late architect Charles W. Moore wrote a seminal essay in 1964 entitled *You Have to Pay for the Public Life*. While the piece documented his perceptions about how public space in America—particularly in California—were changing, it primarily served as a critique of the politics of public space and private development at the time. Moore saw a shift toward private ownership of the public realm. He famously used Disneyland as his case in point, reframing publicness as a byproduct of real estate planning and investment. Though he questioned what the public realm consists of, or even who needs it, Moore also celebrated the importance of “sorting out for our special attention those things for which the public has to pay, from which we might derive the public life.”

Fundamentally, Moore argued paying for



Urbanist Leon Krier inspired urban diagram

the public life is necessary to avoid the loss of differentiated places and the emergence of “gray no-places and the inundation of the places of special significance.” He saw this responsibility extending to both the public agencies and private developers responsible for so much of the built environment that shapes society's shared spaces. Though more than half a century has passed since he expressed his views on the subject, his words remain relevant today.

Even dyed-in-the-wool free marketeers can agree operating within a communal vision and legal framework is potentially profitable. Good public spaces repay the investments in them—both private and public—many times over by abetting economic and cultural vitality. Developers

enjoy the rewards of their commitment to a shared community vision through revenues generated by the desirability of the places they've helped shape. Local governments win too as the tax base swells. This is an implicit social contract, one necessary if our public spaces are to thrive.

Paying for the public life is not a zero-sum proposition. We all win if everyone invests in the betterment of our public spaces.

Randy Nishimura is a principal at Robertson Sherwood Architects in Eugene, Oregon. For more of his writing, visit sworegonarchitect.blogspot.com.



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