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## Great Street Charts

I got them at my favorite store over in the planning tools section, you know, the area behind city plumbing. All right! I thought. First visions, then policy plans and then planning tools. I've loved good tools, ever since I discovered that it was difficult to do finish carpentry with a hatchet.

I bought the whole set. It included great street charts for Broadway, 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Willamette St. all the way to 18<sup>th</sup>. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. too, and then with surprising foresight, 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 13<sup>th</sup>, which together with Franklin/Broadway/Mill St. – it's not just in London that streets change their name every few blocks – are the major connecting corridors between downtown and the 20,000 + students and faculty at the U of O.

I decided to check out the chart for 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., since we now have a good test. Yes, Hugh Pritchard was right. The Federal Courthouse wouldn't have fit. Out of scale. Much too big. We know now that we can experience the actual building that it would have been a poor urban neighbor in the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Market, Station Square, Electric Station environment. It would have been an amalgamated elephant in the garden and bull in the pottery barn lump crammed into a fine-grained historic street.

The chart showed 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. reaching to the river. Good, I thought. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are cut off by the railroad and now the new courthouse, but 5<sup>th</sup> street, since it is already across the tracks, has the potential to connect the market area to our downtown riverfront. This becomes an important connector when EWEB's move at last blasts the key-log out of our return to the river.

So, I was getting the idea. The role of these charts was to more graphically portray our civic aspirations, to give us a "road map" to greatness in the critical corridors of our downtown experience. But road map sounds a bit too Middle Eastern, too arid of imagery. These were definitely Northwestern, fully illustrated, three-dimensional, vividly recorded diagrams of urban relationships and qualities in key places, such as the Mill St. entrance to downtown, the 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. follow the Millrace past Cannery Square return to the river, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. Skinner Market Square conversion of the N. Parking Block. These charts set out the kind of urban design hopes that enable the emergence of great streets.

I remember back in the late 70s when we were in the midst of building the Hult and the Hotel-Conference Center and had no Great Street Charts or any inkling of the need for such planning tools. Gerry McDonnell, who was supervising the construction, brought a Hult Center site plan to my office in the newly restored

Smeed Hotel so I could overlay it with a Hotel-Conference Center plan on my light table. I wanted to see what was in store for Willamette St., an edge that both projects had in common.

It was worse than I'd expected. Willamette St. was just a leftover, the outer limit of each project, neither of which had much to do with one another.

There was no Willamette St. between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, no butte-to-butte iconic corridor or continuity through our town. A row of fir trees was to be planted along 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. to reinforce the edge of the two-block island complex and would have effectively blocked the downtown view to Skinner Butte. Afterward, there was of course some characteristic Eugenean discussion of the problem and some institutional scrambling resulting in the civically challenged street you see today.

The idea of the Great Streets Charts is to prevent more leftovers, because leftovers aren't even pretty good streets.

The idea is to have something positive to put on the table when gentlemen and gentlewomen developers come to call. Something more than a few lines on a map and a few very general policy statements. A representation of city design interests that says we'll invest in your project if you'll invest in ours and here are some of the things the City of Eugene would like to accomplish in and around your project area. You want a parking garage? We want to make Mill St. the entrance foyer to downtown, not just some leftover car zone. We want the 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. entrance from Mill to be special and relate to what happens on the courthouse side, and since you own both sides, maybe we could find a way to have the two projects talk to each other and bridge across.

Imagine how useful these charts will be as we try to evaluate potential places for a City Hall – how they might help us create vital pedestrian passages, avoid dead zones, make sure we mix civic art and activities, and create the variety of kinds of urban open space along our streets that add up to a great downtown.

You want a set of these charts? Better head for Jerry's.