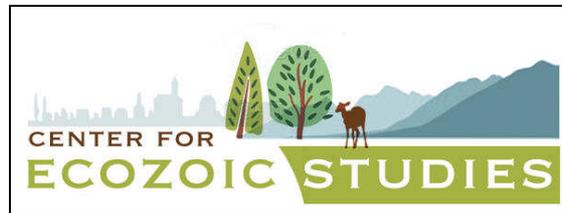


CE'S Monthly Musings

October 2008

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*Seeking integral community
in an ecological age*

“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” means a society of life.

**The “Ecozoic Era” is a time of mutually enhancing relationships
among humans and the larger community of life.**

The “Great Work” is living the promise of the ecozoic.

In this issue: [“Don't Bail Out, BUILD OUT of our Present Economic Debacle”](#), by Richard Register.

DON'T BAIL OUT, BUILD OUT OF OUR PRESENT ECONOMIC DEBACLE

Once upon a time there was an economic disaster that laid low the United States of America and spread hardships from sea to shining sea and even out across the oceans blue. Then came a war of unprecedented proportions. But we beat back the Great Depression and won the Second World War. It's more than a little relevant at this point to ask, "How'd we do that?"

Far from the federal government's admonition to spend vaguely toward prosperity, delivered in the early days of sliding toward our current meltdown with delivery of our juicy little "economic stimulus payments," which we're the first of this year's bail outs and which cost the United States around \$150 billion dollars, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt built us out of the Depression and won the War by saying, "Don't spend - save. Invest in the future of this country and let's built it up as if we believed in its future."

The "it" that got built started out with dams, bridges, post offices, soil reclamation and reforestation projects. The government was paying people, but they actually did something. Then, with Nazi Germany on the warpath and Imperial Japan too, the "it" turned into tanks, guns, bombs and airplanes. But build as if our survival depended on it we did.

Today we wake up to discover we've been building suburban sprawl, the most inefficient form of habitat we could ever have imagined, a form so bad it renders car-based cities the largest contributor to climate change and species extinction extant. There's where the bizarrely expensive houses miles from anything else, with the even more bizarre mortgage terms, began and spread. There's where the mess was first and worst, compounded by the raising cost of gasoline, asphalt, car depreciation and everything else automotive. Take a map of the Bay Area or anywhere else and you will see the per-person demand for energy and contribution to climate change goes up as population density and "mixed-uses" goes down. Surprise! We are facing another World War, the War of the current built environment against the World itself.

So what to build this time around? Instead of dams, guns and bombs our economic and ecological, national and planet survival depends on building the ecologically tuned, higher density, mixed-use city with its subsystems of transit and bicycle transportation and solar and wind energy. Bail out is not the

right term for infusing federal money into building a better world and I doubt Roosevelt used the term, though extreme conservatives of his time probably thought of it as a bail out of the worker. Today's bail out is proposed for the people who at best could go on to loan money into action by financing... something - but what? The last big thing on their track record was exactly what imploded causing the current disaster: car-dependent sprawl, plus a certain measure of their own contagious greed.

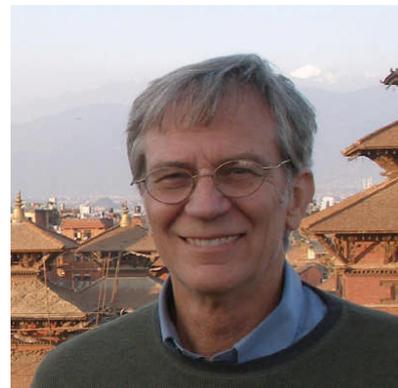
Liberals say bail out the small guy (and don't mention the same old sprawling mess) by trying to shore up mortgages to energy hog buildings and commutes. The general notion that the federal government should actually do something here is completely appropriate, but what?

In early 1942 Roosevelt told the automobile manufacturers it was going to be illegal to make any more cars until this war gets won. They didn't believe it at first, but they got paid, too. And that's what they did: joined everyone building us out of the Depression and War. For a year and a half in the middle of the war - amazing to our ears today - not a car was produced. And we won. We need a clear strategy like the New Deal building up to win the Second World War. I wouldn't advise banning cars today, but I would advise building the city that simply doesn't need them. In other words, how to get out of our economic mess? Build out, don't Bail out. Ecologically tuned cities are the answer.

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Richard Register is President of Ecocity Builders, Inc., of Oakland, and author of *Ecocities - Rebuilding Cities in Balance with Nature*, New Society Publishers.

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