

HOUSING: Price and availability continue to create strains

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executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon, reported that the repayment rate on Habitat for Humanity mortgages, both state- and nation-wide, was 98 percent, even during the 2008-09 recession.

Weed added that of the 63 Habitat homes built in Sisters, there has only been one deed foreclosure.

Vilhauer also said that 92 percent of children who grow up in Habitat for Humanity homes graduate from high school.

Ryan opined that Sisters is experiencing the “perfect storm” where housing is concerned. There is basically a zero vacancy rate for rentals. Not one house for sale in Sisters is listed for under \$300,000. The Council’s goal is to have 10 percent of all housing units be deed restricted affordable and currently 80 units of 1,300 meet that designation. The Sisters Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is restricted due to being surrounded by National Forest land on three sides. At the same time, more people continue to move to Sisters.

The mayor indicated that the Sisters City Council is considering establishing a construction excise tax that would help fund affordable housing. He also talked about the LYFT funds, which helped fund the 48-unit affordable townhouses under construction by Housing Works, the project to which the City contributed \$300,000.

Boddie mentioned there is a bill in the state legislature that, if passed, would put to a vote on the November ballot a constitutional amendment so the state could allow cities to raise bond funds for affordable housing.

Ryan talked about code

assistance that can help builders who are providing affordable housing. They can receive a density bonus for building affordable housing, helping to reduce the land costs. Tamarack Village was granted a height bonus, which allowed them to add a third floor because all the units are affordable.

When asked what people wished they could change, Boddie spoke about wishing there was more understanding by people of the connection between secure housing, health, and education. He sees them as “different components of the same thing.”

Boddie would also like to see voluntary inclusionary zoning that has to be negotiated up front.

“Inclusionary zoning isn’t allowed by the state but it would be good to have. Oregon and Texas are the only states that don’t allow inclusionary zoning,” Boddie said. “We can either plan ahead (to handle the housing needs of all the people moving to Central Oregon) or screw it up so no one wants to move here. We can’t raise local funding all alone. We need the state’s help.”

Weed suggested that the conversation about affordable housing needs to be reframed.

“We need to consider affordable housing part of the infrastructure,” she offered.

Vilhauer closed out the evening saying, “I love that we’re having this conversation.”

She indicated that adequate affordable housing is currently the number-one concern and goal of mayors nationally.

There are plans for the Build Oregon program to be repeated every year in different Oregon locations.

ROUNDAABOUT: Change coming eventually to Locust/Highway 20

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the future needs at the junction, combining the intersection with Buckaroo Trail into the FivePine campus, and allowing the truck scales to remain in their current location.

The roundabout would be built on the current Oregon State Parks triangle of land between Highway 20/126 and would impact some of the new spaces just approved in the Sisters Mobile Home Park.

This is a project that is anywhere from five to 15 years out. The roundabout as proposed would probably have a footprint half again as big as the one at Barclay/US20.

The intersection at Highway 20/Locust is an ongoing problem well known to Sisters residents, many of whom simply avoid the intersection. A near-term solution, with a relatively low price tag, would be the installation of a “mini” roundabout, which requires no additional right-of-way acquisition. With a lifespan of eight to 10 years, it would be fully mountable by large semi-trucks, allowing them to use the alternate route through town on Barclay and Locust, with ease of entry back onto Highway 20. It would have about 80 percent capacity of a large single-lane roundabout, allowing people to enter the intersection more

easily while slowing down traffic entering town.

There are three possible long-term solutions for the Highway 20/Locust intersection, all involving some type of roundabout, which would cost much more than the immediate “mini” and require land acquisition and disruptive construction.

In order to encourage freight traffic to utilize the alternate route along Barclay, a near-term improvement would include a realignment of the Barclay Avenue corridor to allow for a continuous three-lane road with turn lanes for entering and exiting traffic. Some small right-of-way purchases would be required to eliminate the current curves on Barclay.

At the intersection of Barclay and Locust, the traffic entering and exiting Barclay would have the right-of-way to continue without stopping. Traffic coming south on Camp Polk Road/Locust would have to stop before proceeding. In phase two of the realignment, a bike/pedestrian multi-use path could be constructed beside the roadway.

As traffic increases at

that intersection, construction of a roundabout would allow for increased capacity and become a viable, acknowledged alternate truck route.

There are plans to make Washington Avenue a bike boulevard with marked bike lanes and parallel parking, as well as bike paths on the east side of town all the way to the city limits.

There is also the recognized need for increased pedestrian connections in the downtown core, with more sidewalks on streets like Washington and Adams.

Other minor refinements to the TSP involve some updated cost estimates due to projects being added or deleted, such as removing the plan to widen Highway 20 to four lanes and adding restricted turning at Highway 20/Jefferson by Creekside Park. There is also a proposal to add a local street connection onto Highway 20 from Desperado Trail at the east end of the FivePine campus, past Sisters Movie House, with a right-in/right-out on Highway 20.

Projects in the original TSP that have been completed were also identified.

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