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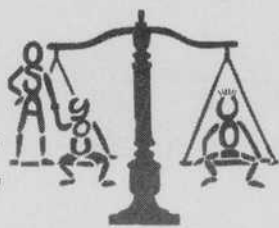
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# Is Government Camp turning chic?

BY TERRY RICHARD | THE OREGONIAN

*Mt. Hood's only ski town got a face-lift this summer  
with newly paved streets and an improved Skibowl*

GOVERNMENT CAMP, Ore. — Be prepared to look twice when you pass through Government Camp for your first winter ski or snowboard trip of the season.

The sleepy town at the foot of Mount Hood is on the verge of becoming chic.

Who would've thought?

A beehive of activity during the summer has given Government Camp, the village at the 4,000-foot level on Mount Hood's south side, the start of a much-needed facelift. The construction made the town look more like Portland's Pearl or South Waterfront districts than a place where village dogs could safely nap in the middle of the street.

Oh, the town core still has the same three restaurants it's had for the past quarter-century. And the only new retail shops are ones that have taken the place of others.

But new amenities should follow next year as condos continue to sprout in Mount Hood's only ski town.

For most of this summer, Government Camp was the scene of more construction than at any time since the building of Timberline Lodge in the 1930s. Clackamas County's 10-year tax increment financing plan for the unincorporated town of 300 year-round residents bore fruit this year by helping fuel these improvements:

- Collins Lake Resort, an upscale condo development with units priced around \$275,000, opened its first units in the center of town late this summer. While privately owned, many of the two-bedroom condos will be available for nightly rental. The first 26 are ready now, 53 more will come on line this winter and 123 more next year.
- Mt. Hood Skibowl, stepchild to the classier Mt. Hood Meadows and Timberline ski areas, has covered the pale blue outside walls of its three-day lodges with cedar siding. The new rock-and-brick entry at Skibowl West will have visitors wondering if they have driven to Colorado without stopping at Mount Hood.
- The central core of the downtown

loop road has newly paved streets, brick paver sidewalks and gutters without curbs. Those improvements may soon be hidden beneath the snow, but visitors will surely notice the \$12,000 street lamps and new welcoming signs. One thing they won't notice is utility wires, which have been placed underground.

- Building facades, ash-gray brick sidewalks and fire-suppression sprinklers have been partially funded by the county's urban renewal district, so several building owners took the bait. The famous Cascadian-style rock work, born nearly a century ago at Crater Lake and Mount Rainier national parks, will be readily apparent on facades around town. A good place to notice is Huckleberry Inn, the closest thing to a town gathering spot.
- A half-dozen residences and smaller condos are under construction on the south side of U.S. 26, a short way from the central core. There's even speculation that a central building lot, vacated since a 1969 fire, is ripe for development.

As the new condos fill with overnight guests, there will inevitably come a need for more restaurants, retail stores and entertainment options beyond skiing. That will be the push for next year, town boosters predict.

"We've seen quite a rush of improvements," said Lloyd Musser, curator of the Mount Hood Cultural Center and Museum. "It used to be

that you could walk into the street and pick up chunks of blacktop. Not any more. It won't look like a dust bowl up here next summer."

The summer season, when Mount Hood is the only place with chairlift skiing in North America, has become a boom time at Government Camp. Having two busy seasons, with relatively short spring and fall shoulder seasons in between, has helped drive the town's residential market.

As a result, an increasing number of drivers are bound to veer off onto

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Follow Hwy 212 through Damascus and Boring.

Follow signs to Sandy/Mt. Hood Hwy 26 East.

Take 26 to Government Camp.

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For more information contact Mt. Hood Skibowl at 1.800.SKIBOWL or visit it website at www.skibowl.com.

Government Camp's loop road and explore the village's small core.

They will still find Mount Hood's busiest tubing hill at Summit Ski Area, the twin mountains at Skibowl, one gas station, the brew pub at the village entrance and the three old-time restaurants in the village core. Until this winter, most lodging has been handled by the Mount Hood Inn motel, Huckleberry Inn lodge, Falcon's Crest Inn bed and breakfast, plus an assortment of vacation rentals and condos available through property managers.

In the past, most winter visitors to Mount Hood spent their time downhill skiing at Timberline and Meadows, or cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling

in the surrounding forest. When they headed home to the Portland area, they passed Government Camp without a second glance.

That scenario should change this winter, if only for the curious who want to see how well the brick-paver sidewalks survive their first winter of battle with the state snow plows.

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