

Silverton's growth, measurable and immeasurable

YOUR TURN
KYLE PALMER

As a lifelong resident, I've obviously watched Silverton go through a number of changes. Commercially, residentially, and logistically, this is not the same city that I grew up in, or even the same one that my kids grew up in.

We've grown in very measurable ways, and in immeasurable ways. I've always drilled that down to some specific markers, and I feel the same as a resident that I do as the mayor.

1. Traffic. Obviously, this is the one that generates the most comments on a daily basis, and I too admit that I'm extremely frustrated when I have to sit at a light through two cycles or have a long wait at any non-signalized intersection.

I travel Main Street, McClaine Street, C Street and Water Street multiple times per day due to my route between home and work, as well as some daily errands that are work-related. I see our traffic at its best and at its worst and there's no question that we have "rush hour" changes.

That said, as anyone will notice during summers, spring break, winter break, etc., a huge factor in those changes is related to school traffic. I would be interested in seeing some statistics on school-bus ridership; see if there has been any identified shift away from the mode and toward more parent drop-offs.

Obviously, a bus with 30 children aboard takes up less space than 30 parents dropping their kids off.

In my opinion, the precipitous rise in traffic is not solely (or maybe even mostly) a direct result in population changes; there have to be some other factors as the explosion of traffic doesn't track parallel to the same rise in residents, though we have seen rises in that area as well.

Perhaps, we could benefit from a

movement to reduce fuel use by carpooling kids (or a "use the bus" movement) if there has been some reduction in school-related "mass transit."

Additionally, there are some engineering changes that may help; changing the lane orientation traveling north and southbound at the C and McClaine signal will help. We don't need a dedicated left-turn lane if you're on C and facing Westfield, but we desperately need a right-turn-only lane there. City staff is working with ODOT to make changes here that will relieve much of the back-up.

2. Commercial Changes. We've had some businesses set up (or plan to set up) shop here that some residents think is a sign of Silverton becoming Keizer or Beaverton, according to social media comments. Dollar Tree, Dollar General, O'Reilly's Auto Parts, and Dominos all represent an increase in corporate "chain" identities that have brought mixed feelings.

That said, these kinds of businesses don't come to Silverton without market research that supports such a decision and there's every indication, in most of those cases anyway, that the community has validated their decision to locate here.

In this area, Silverton seems to have a split personality. Some want no corporate interests. Some want no more commercial development at all. Some love the new choices. Some wish they offered living wage jobs only. Some are thankful for any new employment. It really depends on who you ask.

That said, many also think we can control the content of a prospective business. We can only ensure that a business meets our zoning requirements (one of which is a 20,000 sq. ft. maximum), and ensure that the design elements are compatible, which is a criteria that is always evolving. If a business buys or leases property that is zoned appropriately, there is no way to stop them from siting a

business there.

3. Residential Development Increases. Certainly, the Silver Place Apartments are one topic that gets frequently mentioned to me. Oddly, I've met very few residents who are happy about the addition to our city, but they seem to be filling quickly just the same.

It's been well publicized that a specific state law basically required this to be approved, and any third grader can see that the impact on an already bad area will be significant.

As has been noted often in the past few months, the city's comprehensive plan is due for an update. This is a tool that can be in the center of helping us lay out an appropriate roadmap for Silverton's future, and it would appear that there is council support to begin the process of an update.

That said, there never will be any legal tools available to stop growth, short of a catastrophic problem in our sewer and/or water processing system, and even that would just be temporary. What is vital, however, is that we create a guiding document to make sure that our growth is both controlled and intentional.

Much of our municipal code has been created in a "reactionary" state of mind, adding language to make sure something negative that has happened can't happen again. While this is probably true of most cities, it's time that our development code become more proactive, envisioning our future and planning the way that we will get there.

Despite the undeniable changes in all of these areas, and the fact that this is no longer the city that I grew up in, I still feel strongly that this is very much the community that I grew up in.

Silverton is not a collection of streets, houses, and commercial buildings, it's a community of people who still practice a small town way of thinking and interacting. That is what makes our community unique and amazing. And in that respect,

Your Turn

Have a topic, issue or viewpoint pertinent to Silverton or the east Willamette Valley you would like to share? The Silverton Appeal Tribune welcomes letters to the editor up to 250 words, or submissions to the Your Turn section, from 600 to 750 words, on topics of broader interest.

Contact Justin Much at 503-508-8157 or jmuch@salem.gannett.com.

the place that raised me is alive and well.

I was in Portland recently and no one even made eye contact with me on the sidewalk, but I can't enter our post office once without running into three people I know and exchanging a hello with at least one person I don't.

When someone on social media mentions that they just moved to town, they are typically greeted with a chorus of welcome statements from others. Silverton is a desirable place to live and always has been, and we can expect more people to realize that and come here seeking the same things we hold dear.

We will grow and we will change — it's inevitable — but it doesn't mean we have or ever will lose our sense of community.

Our residents must play an active role in shaping how Silverton evolves. Walk through our downtown once a week; use local businesses and their welcoming attentive staffs for all of your needs; attend and lend your voice to city council, planning commission, or committee meetings; volunteer for one or more of our incredible service organizations.

That is how we ensure that what makes us special will continue regardless of any other changes.

Kyle Palmer is the mayor of Silverton. He can be reached at kpalmer@silverton.or.us, 503- 873-5701

Congress saves pot patients from crackdown

JONATHAN BACH
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
USA TODAY NETWORK

Federal protections for medical marijuana patients are safe for now thanks to an emergency resolution passed by Congress Dec. 21.

Protections offered under the Rohrabacher-Blumenauer Amendment will need to make it into a final congressional spending package to extend past Jan. 19.

That's the expiration date of continuing resolution, a temporary measure that keeps the government running while federal lawmakers hash out the details of their 2018 fiscal-year spending plan. President Trump signed the emergency resolution Friday.

While weed remains federally illegal, the Rohrabacher-Blumenauer Amendment stops the Justice Department from cracking down on patients where state law permits medical marijuana use. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has condemned use of the drug.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Oregon, said, "Patients around the country who rely on medical marijuana for treatment — and the businesses that serve them — now have some measure of certainty. Our fight, however, continues to maintain these important protections in the next funding bill passed by Congress."

Jered DeCamp, who co-owns marijuana retailer Herbal Remedies in South Salem, was happy to hear the news. In addition to being an owner, he's a medical marijuana patient and grower.

"It's nice to know they're protecting us," DeCamp said, though he wished the provisions extended past January.

Congressional lawmakers passed a similar continuing resolution Dec. 7 to keep the government open through Dec. 22.

The newest extension comes after U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, announced he would cosponsor a bill to decriminalize marijuana across the nation. Passage of the Marijuana Justice Act of



Cannabis plants growing in a cultivation space inside Croy's Enterprises near Soldotna, Alaska. ELIZABETH EARL/PENINSULA CLARION VIA AP

2017 would make the Rohrabacher-Blumenauer Amendment obsolete.

The amendment is named for U.S. Reps. Blumenauer and Dana Rohrabach-

er, R-California.

Reach staff reporter Jonathan Bach by email at jbach@statesmanjournal.com or by phone at 503-399-6714.

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