



An Icy Perch
in Outdoors

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THE OBSERVER

SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

Weekend Edition

SATURDAY– MONDAY • January 2, 2021 • \$1.50 Good day to our valued subscriber Pamela Lovell of Summerville

Real estate market hot in Union, Wallowa counties

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The real estate market in Union and Wallowa counties is generating a buzz as dynamic elements come together to create a hot seller's market.

"It is almost like these forces are converging to create the perfect storm," said Patty Glaze, a broker with Blue Summit Realty Group of La Grande.

The dynamics Glaze is referring to include a scarcity of homes available for sale.

"We have super-low inventory. This is the lowest I can remember," said John Howard, the owner of John Howard Real Estate & Associates, who has worked in local real estate since the 1990s.

Dan Cosner, the owner and principal broker of A-1 Realty Northwest, La Grande, agrees.

"This is the lowest I've seen it (the inventory)," said Cosner, who has been involved in Union County real estate for 26 years.

Statistics from the Regional Multiple Listing Service illustrate how tight the real estate market is in Union and Wallowa counties. The figures indicate that as of November Union County had an residential home inventory of 1.1 months and Wallowa County had an inventory of 3.6 months. Both are down substantially from the same time a year ago when Union County's inventory was 3.8 months and Wallowa County's inventory was 6.2 months.

Months of inventory is a measure of how fast all the existing homes on a market would likely last if no more listings are added.

The low inventory, which partially reflects limited home building over the past decade, means homes in Union and Wallowa counties are selling for higher prices. The average sale price of homes in Union County went up 6.5% the first 11 months of 2020 and 21.6% in Wallowa County over the same period according to RMLS Market Action reports.

Glaze said the increases indicate that in some cases people were offering to pay more than the asking price for homes because there is such competition for them.

This means home buyers do not have the luxury of taking their

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Kaleb Lay/The Observer

Cowboy and Angel's Place in Elgin opened several weeks before Friday, Jan. 1, 2021 for in-person dining in defiance of state guidelines, according to owner Teri Fuhrman. Cowboy and Angel's has laid off half its staff because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restaurant rebellion

Businesses defy state measures with far-right support

By KALEB LAY
The Observer

UNION COUNTY — At least one restaurant in Union County is joining with others across Oregon in flouting state public health measures that aim to slow the spread of COVID-19. The mass reopening has the backing of a far-right group, the People's Rights Network.

The move comes as continued prohibition of in-person dining services eats into restaurants' revenue. Many have had to cut staff, even with the help of government aid programs.

Pushed to the edge

A restaurant in Elgin is taking part in the early opening movement. Teri Fuhrman, owner of Cowboy and Angel's Place, said her restaurant opened three weeks ago with backing from the People's Rights Network.

"The most important thing is trying to keep from losing the restaurant," Fuhrman said. "Takeout ... doesn't work for keeping the doors open and trying to keep somebody here. And you've got three restaurants and then you've got the drive-thru here in Elgin — we're all struggling."

"The most important thing is trying to keep from losing the restaurant. Takeout ... doesn't work for keeping the doors open."

— Teri Fuhrman, owner of Cowboy and Angel's Place in Elgin

Cowboy and Angel's Place has had to lay off half its employees due to the pandemic, from eight before down to four now, including Fuhrman and her husband. She said that had they not opened for in-person dining some three weeks ago, the restaurant would have survived only another month, perhaps, even with help from government aid programs.

"It just is to the point that, we believe as long as we meet the standards required with the mask and the sanitizing of hands and, you know, taking care of the tables and all of the ways that we can keep our staff safe and the customers safe, we're going to have people sit down and eat," Fuhrman said.

Cowboy and Angel's Place, she said, would be following previous guidance on wiping down tables and spreading people out in the restaurant, but she said

it was up to customers whether they would wear a mask while inside.

Fuhrman's message of desperation has been echoed across the state as many restaurants prepare to reopen en masse in the new year. She said that the Summerville Store and Tavern was providing in-person dining services, though the Summerville Tavern denied that claim.

The Oregon Trail Restaurant in Baker City moved to open during the in-person dining prohibition earlier in December.

Troubling ties

Fuhrman's restaurant is part of the larger movement to reopen businesses across Oregon. That movement is backed by a far-right group known as the People's Rights Network, which was originally

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Wallowa County ready to disburse CARES funding

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Checks of anywhere from about \$1,200 to more than \$14,000 will soon be going out to Wallowa County businesses hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic now that the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners has voted to disburse the funds.

Just over a month ago, the county received a one-time payment of \$563,232 from the state through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act to be used by the county to assist local businesses for expenditures that occurred from March 1 to Dec. 30.

On Monday, Dec. 28, the

BY THE NUMBERS

- Each of Oregon's 36 counties received \$500,000. Additional money was allocated depending on factors such as population and number of businesses. Wallowa County got \$563,232, which will be divided among the 67 businesses that qualified for CARES funds.

commissioners formally agreed in a special session to disburse the funds.

Last week, they established criteria for how that money would be divided up among 67 businesses that had submitted applications and were approved.

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Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

From left, Wallowa County Commissioners Todd Nash, John Hillock and Susan Roberts, met Monday, Dec. 28, 2020, in a special session to vote to disburse \$563,232 in CARES Act funds to 67 county businesses as part of COVID-19 relief.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight

37 LOW

Rain and drizzle



Sunday

46/34

Showers around

CONTACT US

541-963-3161

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La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



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TUESDAY

HEAD START GETS HELP

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