

**RURAL HOUSING, from page 10**

Pointe, a five-story building in downtown Bend with retail businesses on the lower level and four stories on one and two-bedroom apartments, as a model for affordable housing for the future.

"We need housing for the workforce, period," Callicott said. "We need affordable housing for people of all economic strata. You can't build a single-family home for a family that makes \$37,000. It does have to be HUD housing. It has to be smart."

As Central Oregon government and public policy continues identifying ways to incentivize more construction, there is a growing chorus of service providers, outreach workers and activists who want to create a city-sanctioned camp or tiny house village for at least a portion of Central Oregon's homeless to safely camp and access services.

On Feb. 23, Sally Pfeifer, the owner of the drug and alcohol counseling service Pfeifer & Associates, started a warming shelter for up to 30 people in her offices.

The warming shelter is only open when nighttime temperatures dip below 32 degrees. It's bare bones: mats on the floor from 8 p.m. until 7 a.m. in a space used for group therapy during the day.

On March 7, she sent an email to dozens of elected officials, social service providers and advocates.

"Please take this all into consideration as you walk around downtown for your evening fun and meals," Pfeifer wrote. "Are there less people to walk over? Are there less frightened tourists and community members? Is there more time for officers to do other things than chase homeless people from one door jamb to another, which they hate doing?"

"Everyone has voiced their support for a solution to the homeless crisis," the email continued. "We are now getting a taste of how a homeless village could benefit the community of Bend. ... There are solutions."

More than anything, people in Central Oregon fear becoming another Aspen, Colo., - the chichi resort and mountain town "where no cop, no firefighter, any service (worker) can live in the community that they're serving," Callicott said. "That's ridiculous."

**WORKFORCE, from page 9**

people who traditionally rent and make lower incomes.

Callicott, of Five Talent Software, would not disclose the average salary his software developers make, saying it is "highly confidential."

But he did say they are "very well paid" with salaries in a range typical for software developers, with \$60,000 a year as a starting salary.

"It's not the kind of position you expect, in Oregon, would have a difficult time affording a home," he said.

The software developer that Callicott offered his home to was ultimately able to find a home and stay in Central Oregon.

Rob Duvalle, the human resources director for the City of Bend, has had similar conversations to Callicott's. One employee of the city of Bend moved to the area from across the country and lived with friends for months. "Where do you live?" Duvalle remembers asking the person. "I don't really know," was the response.

The city of Bend has lost more than a handful of employees due to housing concerns, including a utility worker, Duvalle said. The base salary for such a position is \$20.10 an hour. "That's not a low wage," he observed.

"It's a hurdle right now," Duvalle said of the housing market. "We've lost employees that have moved here. We've been unable to hire certain employees who have wanted to move here. It has negatively effected our ability to secure talent."

Questions from job candidates about housing are "frequent," Duvalle said, and that his staff have started asking candidates during the interview process if they are aware of the region's housing market and whether they've started looking for housing.

"We make sure they've done their homework," he said. "The last thing we want is a great candidate that we love, and then all of a sudden they call us and say they can't show up."

St. Charles Health System, which operates hospitals in Bend, Redmond, Madras and Prineville, and employs more than 12,000 Central Oregonians, has been hard pressed to fill certain positions due to the housing crunch.

Rebecca Barry, St. Charles' vice president of human resources, said

more and more recruits are turning down job offers because they cannot find homes they can afford.

"We've had people accept offers, be very excited, with full intentions of coming here, and then (start) their home search ... and they can't afford it," she said.

The positions most affected at the hospital, Barry said, are surgical technicians and certified nursing assistants (CNAs). Both those positions, according to Barry, pay \$25 an hour.

The hospital is also having a hard time filling support positions, including processing and lab jobs, along with posts in housekeeping, janitorial and food service, partially because the hospital is competing with restaurants and other businesses in the area.

The time-consuming process of recruiting, screening and interviewing candidates is all for nought if the prospective candidate can't live in the area.

"That's a lot of time, effort and money, and then we're back to square one," Barry said. "There's not always a backup candidate."

The hospital has begun to rely on on-call surgical techs and nurses who travel to work at the hospital. They're a more expensive labor pool, Barry said, because they don't earn benefits and the hospital must pay for their temporary housing while they work for the hospital. "It's a short-term fix, and it's not what you want to depend on," she said.

Barry said that St. Charles is beginning to discuss how to encourage lower-skilled workers, such as housekeeping or food staff, to become CNAs, including partnering with Central Oregon Community College to offer a training program.

Bend's housing market has forced many workers, including employees of Callicott's, to live outside of Bend, instead choosing to live in nearby

Redmond, 16 miles away and a half-hour commute to the north. "Most of the younger ones are single, living by themselves," Callicott said. "They carpool in."

A few years ago, Duvalle said, the prospect of living in Redmond and commuting to Bend to work would have been a "deal breaker" in recruitment

conversations.

Aycock, of the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, said he is beginning to investigate employer-assisted housing programs, which Minnesota and other communities around the country use. Such a program either provides company-owned housing to new

employees while they seek housing of their own or have forgivable down-payment loan programs that help employees make a down payment for a home.

An affordable housing project of 48 apartment units recently broke ground in the city of Sisters. The city contributed \$300,000, or 6 percent of its general fund, toward the project.

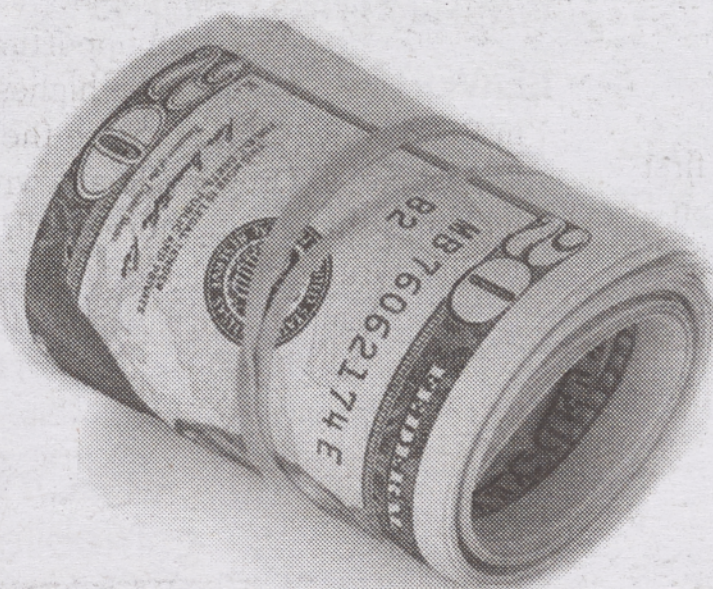
Brant Kucera, the city manager of Sisters, said providing housing affordable to all income levels is not only necessary for the many service workers who work in Sisters, but essential to the long-term viability of his community.

"We have our school district to sustain," he said. "In the future, we need people with children to be moving here. The only way to do that is making sure we have housing affordable to people in their childbearing years. People can live in Sisters and work in Bend - that's not a big deal to me. I want them to live in Sisters first."

"Communities are made up of people from all walks of life," he continued. "We need to make sure that, when we develop housing, that we have all levels of affordability."

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- ROB DUVALLE  
CITY OF BEND



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