

 Housing Rural Oregon

THE MASTER BUILDER

Tom Kemper harnessed knowledge in law, finance and development to build hundreds of affordable-housing units in Central Oregon

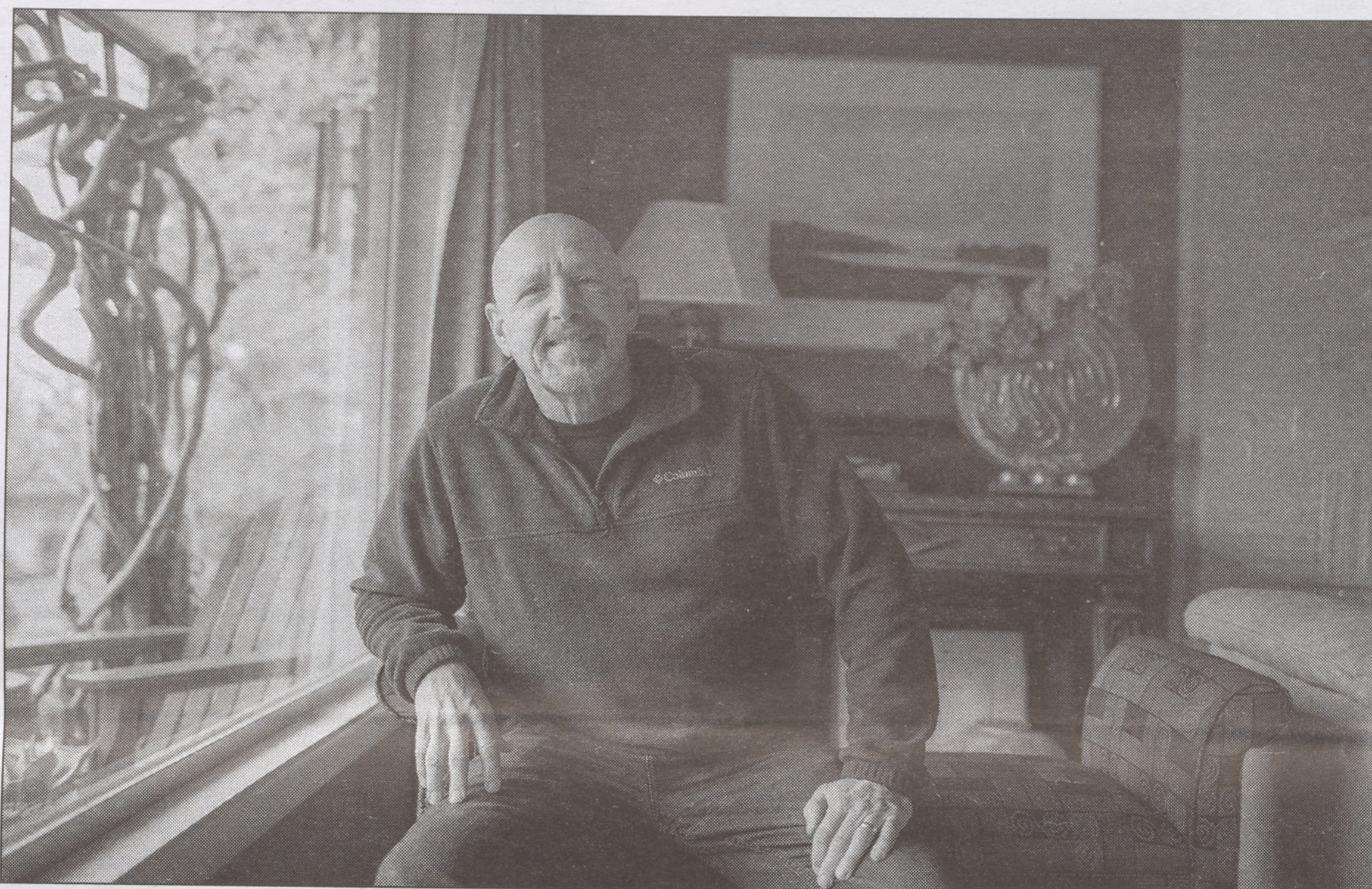


PHOTO BY CELESTE NOCHE

Tom Kemper recently retired after five years as the executive director of Central Oregon's public housing authority.

BY AMANDA WALDROUPE
STAFF WRITER

If you ask anyone in Central Oregon who has been the most productive developer of affordable-housing units in the region, you will get the same name over and over again: Tom Kemper.

Kemper retired as the executive director of Housing Works, Central Oregon's public housing authority, this month after working in that position for five years.

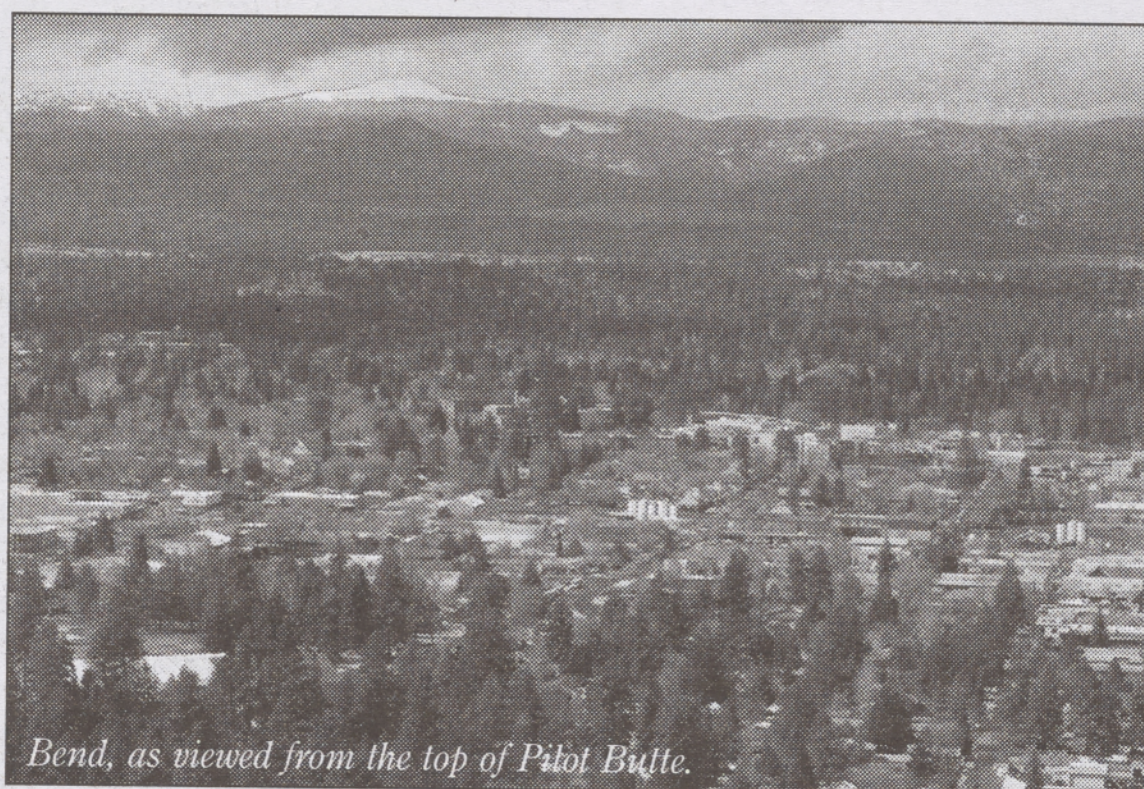
His time as executive director may have been brief, but he has made an indelible impact on Central Oregon's stock of affordable housing.

Under his leadership, Housing Works has nearly doubled the number of affordable-housing units the agency operates; it has developed more than 400 units, bringing the authority's portfolio to a little over 1,000.

"Without a doubt, he's changed the landscape of affordable housing in Central Oregon," said Lynne McConnell, the city of Bend's affordable-housing manager. "Just by the productivity of (Housing Works) and putting units on the ground."

Kemper leaves behind a legacy of creating housing, as well as a reputation as a visionary thinker who made Housing Works the largest provider of affordable

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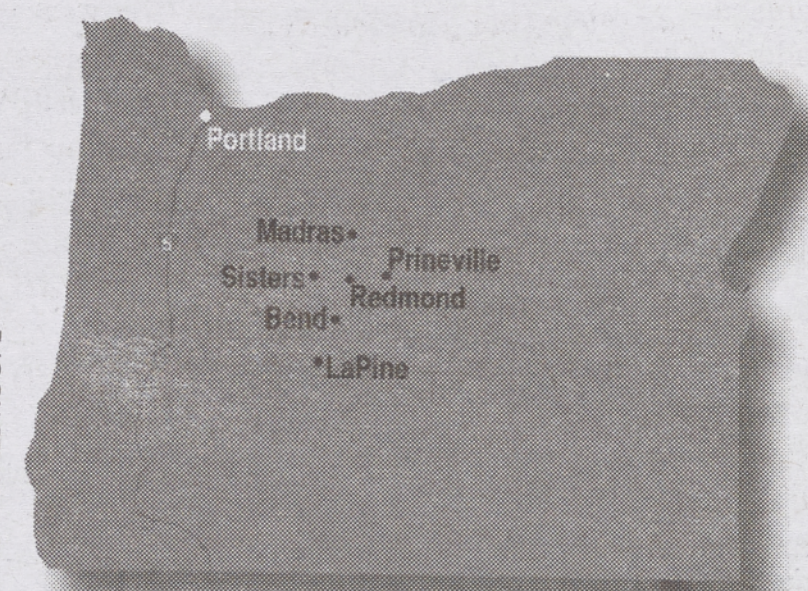
Bend, as viewed from the top of Pilot Butte.

PHOTO BY AMANDA WALDROUPE

Poverty – with a view

— Part Two: Through the Eyes of a Developer —

Once a rural timber and agricultural region, Central Oregon is now beset with a housing shortage and an increase in homelessness. How will the region respond as it continues to grow?



About this series

This article is part of Street Roots' Housing Rural Oregon series. It is the second in a collection of stories looking at Central Oregon. Street Roots received funding from Meyer Memorial Trust's Affordable Housing Initiative to develop dedicated reporting on rural housing issues. Read previous articles from the series at news.streetroots.org/ruralhousing