Praxis Health acquires Redmond clinic

BY SUZANNE ROIG CO Media Group

High Lakes Health Care has acquired Central Oregon Family Medicine in Redmond as part of the family-owned and operated health care operations expansion plans.

Operated by Praxis Medical Group LLC, High Lakes has been on a quest for the past three years of acquiring smaller, unique medical groups and incorporating them into its Oregon network of primary care doctors and specialists. This is the fifth clinic the health care provider has acquired.

The Redmond acquisition is the latest and will be combined with the Redmond High Lakes Health Care at 645 NW 4th Street in Redmond starting Nov. 1, according to the company statement.

The Central Oregon Family Medicine clinic has been in Redmond for 25 years.

"Central Oregon Family Medicine has a rich history in the Redmond community as high performing, busy primary care group," said Dan McCarthy, Praxis Health CEO. "They are representative of everything we evaluate when acquiring a practice: They are responsible stewards of the healthcare dollar; they have a staff that is highly engaged; and they bring a level of innovation that we can learn from."

The acquisition will include expanding the hours and adding more physicians to keep pace with Redmond's growth, McCarthy said. Also being added will be behavioral health care, and access to the network of providers in the Praxis Health system, he said.

Praxis employs 627 people. It purchased High Lakes in 2006. Dr. Mark Hughes and Peggy Hayner, a family nurse practitione, said in a company statement that they welcome the partnership and "look forward to continuing to serve their patients and the growing Redmond community for many more years."

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High Lakes' primary care office is at Shevlin Health and Wellness Center in Bend.

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Central Oregon real estate market in transition

BY SUZANNE ROIG CO Media Group

Central Oregon sellers may find that they're not getting multiple offers within days of listing their homes for sale, but that doesn't mean the market is turning in favor of buyers.

It does indicate, however, that a transition is building from a seller's market to a more balanced real estate market for Central Oregon, said Donnie Montagner, owner of Beacon Appraisal Group in Redmond. Real estate professionals say that more homes are up for sale and taking longer to sell. When those two home-sales components change, it creates a more balanced market for buyers and sellers, Montagner said.

Prior to the pandemic, in 2020, a single-family home in Bend could sell within four to 75 days. That time period contracted in 2021 to four to 12 days, Montagner said.

By comparison, during the height of the Great Recession, which began in late 2007, a single-family home took anywhere from 76 days to 153 days to go from being listed for sale to having a final contract agreed to by both buyers and sellers, Montagner said.

In Bend, on average, single-family homes should take about 80 days to sell, he said. When homes take longer to sell, it swells the inventory. Typically a six-month supply of homes for sale is necessary for a stabilized real estate market, Montagner said. But in August, there was nearly a two-month



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

A group of houses for sale in southeast Bend on Monday.

supply of homes for sale.

We have some ground to cover in terms of days on market," Montagner said. "We have to increase the inventory. Until then, it's favorable market to sellers to some degree."

Home sales have definitely been affected by rising interest rates set by the Federal Reserve, said Tim Booher, SELCO Community Credit Union mortgage loan officer. Rates have been raised three times so far this year by the Fed as a way to slow

down the economy and rein in record high inflation caused by the pandemic.

Looking ahead, interest rates will continue to rise, Booher said. But the housing market transition is also being affected by people returning to the office and that dissuades the outof-the-area homebuyers from relocating to Central Oregon, he said.

"Rising interest rates have slowed the market from what had been a record-setting pace

over the last couple of years," Booher said. "With higher interest rates, some first-time homebuyers and our lower-income members are being priced out of the market."

It's even affecting new housing markets. While sales are still occurring, some newhome builders have slowed the pace of building to adjust for fewer buyers.

"We're still selling houses," said George Hale, president of Woodhill Homes, which has several projects in Bend, Redmond and Sisters. "People still want to live in Central Oregon. There are things in place now that allow people to work from anywhere."

In August, the median sales price of a single-family home in Bend was \$717,000, down from the month before, but \$82,000 higher than the same time period the year before, according to the Beacon Report.

But in Redmond, the median price of a single family home rose to \$542,000

in August, from \$505,000 in July. A year ago, the median sales price in Redmond was \$450,000, according to the Beacon Report.

In Sisters, the median sales price of a single-family home was \$730,000 in August, with about a 1.3-month supply of homes for sale, the same as in July, according to the report. That median sales price is more than \$100,000 higher than July's prices.

Sunriver continued to hover in the same range in August. The report posted a median sales price for a single-family home at \$920,000, down just slightly from July, when the median sales price was \$975,000 in Sunriver, according to the report.

And in La Pine, the median single-family home sales price remained basically the same in August — \$473,000 — as in July. The supply of homes for sale remained the same, at three months, in August as in July, according to the report.

The Beacon Report uses the median sales price, which is the midpoint value of all transactions in a month.

"All in all these are normal corrections in the market," Montagner said. "It's still a seller's market. People are cautious. And until we get consistent interest rates, there will remain caution from a buyer. And until the inventory swells, marketing time extends, it won't become a buver's market. The market is in a transition."

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Critics say Oregon regulatory barrier delays water conservation projects

BY MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI CO Media Group

A Central Oregon irrigation project cannot seek key water grant funding this year due to a regulatory barrier that critics say is unnecessary and counterproductive.

Unless an alternative funding source is found, the project faces delays that threaten to disrupt its complex, multi-year schedule for replacing open canals with pipelines, said Steven Johnson, manager of the Arnold Irrigation District near Bend.

"It makes it really problematic to be

able to plan for the future," he said. The Arnold Irrigation District's

proposal, which intends to conserve water while helping threatened Oregon spotted frogs, is the third to be disqualified by the bureaucratic requirement.

The repeated problems encountered by irrigation districts indicate the grant requirement is impeding water efficiency upgrades and should be revised, said April Snell, executive director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress, which represents irrigation districts.

"It should not be something that prevents them from achieving those water conservation benefits," she said.

The regulation disqualifies irrigation districts from state water grant funding if they fail to update their "agricultural water management and conservation plans," or Ag WMCPs.

However, that requirement only applies to irrigation districts that wrote such plans in the first place, while those that have never developed a plan are still eligible, she said.

In effect, the requirement penalizes

velop water conservation plans, Snell said.

"If a district ever submitted one to the state, they're going to have to forever update that," she said. "It's a huge disincentive to do an Ag WMCP."

While state law requires city governments to develop similar water conservation plans, the process is voluntary for irrigation districts, she said. Some elect to create the plans to unlock access to other tools and programs.

The plans are considered current for 5-10 years, depending on the type

Updating a plan requires hiring an engineer and undergoing a public comment process, which is expensive and time-consuming for cashstrapped irrigation districts, she said.

"Many of our districts don't feel like anything has changed since the last time they did it," Snell said.

Postponing a project to update the plan can entail serious risks, she said.

Oregon's water supply grants are often used as matching funds for federal financial assistance, on which the clock can eventually run out, Snell





