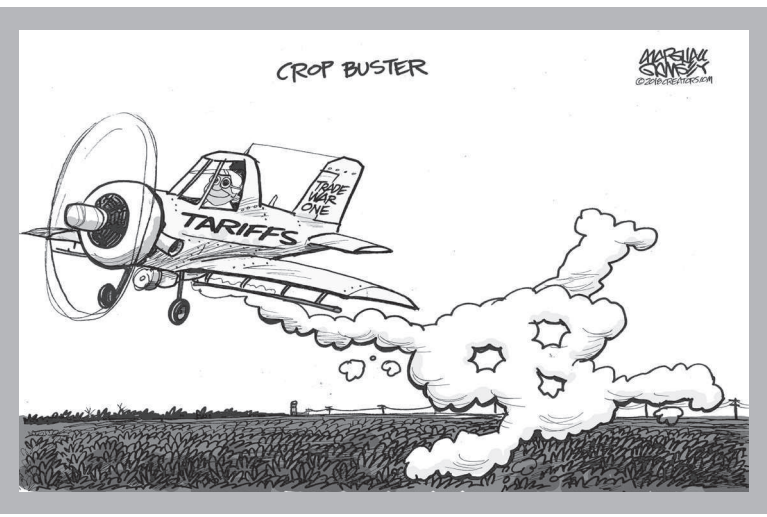


Opinion



An inconvenient truth

The Keizer City Council and Keizer Planning Commission will be discussing the most recent findings of a revitalization study focused on Keizer's business corridors at a work session Monday, Aug. 27.

The goals of the study are two-fold: determining how can the city promote new and redevelopment and how can it capture more housing units in the process. While both are important, the council should be paying close attention to the ramifications of the housing component.

Three months ago, this paper ran an article looking at some of the early results of the study that showed Keizer moving in the direction of gentrification—the process by which low-income families are pushed out of an area as redevelopment occurs. In the preliminary findings, the number of households making less than \$25,000 dropped 5 percent since 2000, and the number of even moderate-income households is decreasing steadily. In the past 18 years, the number of households making less than \$75,000 declined rapidly while the growth of households making \$100,000 steadily increased. More worryingly, low income families find themselves relegated to certain pockets of the city and even rental rates in those areas are rising meteorically—more than 50 percent in the past five years.

The more recent results of the study show continued warning signs.

Two of the three scenarios of growth the council will discuss Monday call for redevelopment of many existing properties into multi-story, multi-family developments like apartments and townhouses. New developments along these lines would most likely

replace existing structures in the dwindling pockets of affordability with top-of-market spaces that current residents and their families will no longer be able to afford.

In the wake of our last article on the topic, we heard from several readers who suggested we got it wrong. They wanted more gentrification, a more elite status for the neighborhoods of Keizer.

That is understandable, but it ignores an inconvenient truth: In a capitalist society, a certain segment of the population must inhabit the lower rungs of the economic ladder for those at the top to flourish. Ideally, those at the low income end of the spectrum can work their way up, but chances at upward mobility in America are drying up and not every “American Dream” looks the same.

Keizer must continue to have housing available for those with challenged incomes. It a matter of decency and compassion at its core, but city councilors and residents should remember that even those with modest incomes contribute to the success of our local businesses and the fabric of our community.

— Editorial Board

editorial

Supporting the local team

To the Editor:

I feel someone needs to reach out to say thanks for your sports section. Your sports department has always shown great support of our team (I feel it should encourage people in our community to go to more games).

The Volcano players have tried as well as they can, even though they have faltered at times. They may not win first place in their division but their win/lost record is in a good shape to reach the playoffs.

Their manager, Hector Borg, is

letters

doing an outstanding job trying to cope with decisions handed down by the San Francisco Giants, beyond his control. He also has to deal with three players now on the disabled list, due to being hit by opposing teams.

It is the *Keizertimes*, not the Salem newspaper, who I personally feel has taken more time showing support “stepping to the plate” to cover the Salem-Keizer Volcano baseball team.

Congratulations *Keizertimes* and your sports section for such support of our local team.

Sam La Masa
Keizer

GROWTH,

continued from Page A1

This would mean some office spaces are replaced with more mixed use residence/office spaces. Retail jobs would increase another 7 percent, but office jobs would decrease by the same amount.

The most costly infrastructure impact of such changes are that some intersections would need to be upgraded sooner than planned. However, additional public safety and school staff would be needed to accommodate new families.

In the case of police services, Keizer would need to find a way to absorb such costs. The Keizer Fire District and Salem-Keizer School District would need to find the means to accommodate increases within their jurisdictions.

UPZONING

Upzoning would mean strategically changing certain types of development to increase density.

In practical terms, such changes would mean allowing single-family lots to build additional units or construct townhomes; reclassifying some medium density zones as mixed use; consolidating single-family lots along arterial and redeveloping them as multi-story, multifamily buildings; and converting some industrial properties to mixed use.

Moving in this direction would assume that Keizer's commercial areas offer enough diversity of services that potential residents are willing to pay more to live closer to those areas. But, the changes could result in the addition of almost 2,500 new residential units – mostly multifamily. About 125 new single-family units could also be added. About 2,100 new jobs could be added by adopting this revitalization strategy.

The city would likely need to perform a new transportation system analysis to determine how the growth might affect traffic flow, but most current infrastructure is sufficient.

Police and fire protection services would likely need to expand to accommodate the increased population. Schools would also need to re-evaluate service levels and, possibly, boundaries for individual schools.

SIGNS,

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He found new material, but it didn't always occur to Zerr how meaningful the sign was to people.

“When we had groundbreaking for this church, which was six years ago, former mayor Lore [Christopher] was there, very happily, at the groundbreaking. ... She said to me kind of in an offhand comment, ‘I want to thank you for the sayings on the signs. Some of them made my day,’” Zerr said. “And that’s when I began to realize that we had an obligation in a way, it’s the only sign like that in Keizer, and it’s just a moment to help people with life a little bit.”

Zerr sees the sign as a way to make a small impact in people’s lives, even if it’s just a momentary chuckle as they drive down River Road.

“The world’s in such bad shape these days – I don’t want to read the news anymore – you get these things

Market headwinds may curb growth

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the *Keizertimes*

From the outset of the Keizer Revitalization Plan, Community Development Director Nate Brown has said the city intends “to change the way it does business” with regard to development along River Road. However, the city can change its practices and still find itself in a market unable or unwilling to meet it halfway.

According to a Gap Analysis the Keizer City Council and Keizer Planning Commission will discuss in a work session Monday, Aug. 27, the market to develop or redevelop in Keizer is “soft but rising.”

That conclusion is based on trends in the rental market. An average Keizer rent pencils out to approximately \$1.20 per square foot, or \$900 a month for a 750-square-foot apartment.

“While it may sound like a lot of money, such rent levels will not justify new construction. Simply put, the rate of return will not be high enough for a bank to loan on a project at that rate,” states the analysis prepared by Otak, Inc., Angelo Planning Group, Johnson Economics, and Kittelson & Associates.

The \$1.20 per square foot amount would mean about a 5.8 percent return on investment and builders

would likely seek a 10 to 12 percent return before pulling the trigger on a new Keizer project.

Driving up the going rate per square foot would likely also require Keizer’s “downtown” to become a destination space that residents would pay more to be closer to. However, currently the city lacks entertainment options for anyone under the age of 21 and the diversity of services remains somewhat limited overall.

Another hurdle is the city’s low jobs-to-housing ratio. A balanced ratio is considered slightly more than one job per household. Keizer has .48 jobs per household and more than a third of them are in the retail sector. According to the study, economists suggests ideal communities have about 10 percent of their jobs in retail.

Additionally, new and redevelopment could potentially price some Keizer families out of Keizer completely. In the most rosy projections, the city could add as many as 2,500 new residences, but those will most likely come at the expense of those already in the lower income brackets.

“New buildings are generally built at the high end of the price range within the city. Rental residential buildings that redevelop are often also the ones with the lowest monthly rents,” the study suggests.

RELEASE: Man accused of raping three minors

(Continued from page A1)

27, as a condition of his release and he is not to have contact with his victims.

Suspects are released from the Marion County jail most often due to overcrowding. A risk-assessment tool, essentially a computer algorithm, weighs several factors and projects the risk of a future conviction. Myers rated fairly high (58 per-

cent) on the possibility of a future arrest, but other suspects arrested in recent days scored even higher.

Keizer Police Department detectives believe Myers has been engaging in similar activity for the past several years and there may be more victims. Anyone with information on unidentified victims is encouraged to come forward and contact Det. Arsen Avetisyan at 503-856-3514.



and it sticks in your head, and if somebody’s having a bad day, and the sign cheers them up or gets them thinking a little bit, gosh, I think that’s great.”

And while the messages bend toward Jesus-centric, they are also meant for the community at large.

“I think that that’s a way that we can make a difference, by not being Catholic so much as assisting people with life a little bit,” Zerr said. “What we put up there is very denomination-neutral, it’s faith-neutral in some ways, because it is meant for the whole community.”

The sign has its evangelical purpose, however. Some current parishioners were lured into the church by the pithy sayings on the sign.

“We had a guy who came in named Ed. We called him Drive-By Ed because he drove by, came in and joined the church,” Zerr said. “Many people spur-of-the-moment will come in from seeing those things. They think, well, there’s a Catholic church with a sense of humor and they’ll come in and check it out. Some stay,” Zerr said.

Announcements for twice-annual Catholics Come Home classes have also found receptive audiences in the drive-by crowd.

The slogans that end up on the sign go through a vetting process. Suggestions for the sign are brought forward at St. Edward’s 15-person staff meetings, to make sure they really are funny, and definitely not offensive or political. Suggestions come from Zerr himself, the church staff, his collection of church-slogan books and the community.

“I’m a strong believer in collaboration. These things need to be discussed in a group, so we can decide what works,” he said.

One of the most popular slogans the church has used was a pun-filled

suggestion during the Fourth of July barbecue season: “Ketchup with Jesus, lettuce praise and relish him.”

“That was the saying that got the most attention of anything,” Zerr said.

But more than Zerr’s love of puns, the sign helps him live out a mission rooted in faith, one that he didn’t come upon until after a 10-year career with American Airlines. During that time, he was involved with his church, but didn’t make the commitment to become a priest until he was 35 years old.

“I had a career before I came here. ... Having been somebody that drove by many times before I ever got into the clergy, I know what it’s like to need something. I know how much I would’ve appreciated seeing something like that, before I was a priest, on my local church or on somebody else’s church, anybody’s church,” Zerr said. “I would’ve been so grateful that they put those darn things up, because life is just not always very happy for people.”

BURGER,

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“The Keizer location will serve as a new benchmark and entry into Portland and other metropolitan areas,” Seki said.

After some discussion and wrangling of the details, members of the city council approved the awning amendment unanimously. In-N-Out wanted the change so that its hallmark palm tree awnings would be allowed under city sign codes.

“I’ve seen the new Grants Pass one and it’s immaculate. I think it will be a great addition to Keizer Station,” said Councilor Marlene Parsons.

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Web Poll Results

Has the booming economy trickled down to your household?

61% – No
39% – Yes

Vote in a new poll every Thursday!

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com

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