



An artist's rendering of the Home2 Suites by Hilton that recently opened in Bend.

## Redmond hotel growth a boon for business

By SUZANNE ROIG  
*The Bulletin*

The developer of two hotels in Redmond and one in Bend is bullish on central Oregon and plans to add more near the Pine Ridge Inn on SW Mt. Bachelor Drive.

Wealth Hospitality, which formerly was called Heritage Hospitality, will be responsible for building more hotel rooms over the next decade in Bend and Redmond, according to Chico Patel, company president. The development company recently opened a Home2 Suites near St. Charles Bend.

Central Oregon has seven to eight months a year of occupancies north of 80%, Patel said. Those are great rates for a developer especially in markets that cater to the outdoors and are projecting continued growth.

"We're looking at a combination of leisure and business travelers at these properties," Patel said. "The growth of Redmond has been exceptional."

Normally a town the size of Redmond with a population of about 36,000, according to U.S. Census Bureau 2019 estimates, has nearly a dozen major branded hotels, Patel said. Today it has a Comfort Suites, a SCP Redmond Hotel and a Best Western Plus.

"Redmond continues to show strong growth and as the community and other economic drivers like the Redmond Airport and the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center continue to grow, the demand for overnight stays in Redmond will grow exponentially," said Eric Sande, Redmond Chamber of Commerce executive director.

Patel's firm was poised to open a 105-room Hampton Inn & Suites in Redmond in March, near the airport, but an electrical rooftop fire a year ago delayed the opening, Patel said. The company spent the past seven months negotiating with insurance people and investigators to make the repairs. Water damage required the project be stripped back to its frame. The hotel will open next year sometime.

A second hotel in Redmond, a Holiday Inn Express, is awaiting financing, which has been difficult to obtain with COVID-19 related closures and restrictions, Patel said. That property, which is next to the Hampton Inn off U.S. Highway 97, will have 100 rooms.

"With the brands we're investing in, we feel long term will be good," Patel said.

"The feasibility studies seem strong and that we'll perform pretty well long term."

"Travel is bottlenecked. We feel pretty confident for 2022. These are the markets that people are thinking for outdoor vacations. COVID-19 is increasing travel to outdoor places like this."

Construction has begun on the parking lot improvements at the Pine Ridge Inn in Bend. Sometime in 2022 construction will begin on 36 luxury condos, Patel said. Following the ground breaking on the condos, Patel hopes to begin construction on a 115-room Hyatt House Hotel and an Autograph Marriott in 2024.

Wealth Hospitality has built about 70 hotels from the ground up, said Patel. Right now there are about 36 projects underway.

## Eastern Oregon man survives attack from bear

By JAYSON JACOBY  
*Baker City Herald*

Noah Beckner barely had time to recognize the animal as a black bear before it was swatting a claw-tipped paw at his head.

He ducked just in time.

The paw, as Beckner puts it, "nicked" his face.

Beckner, 19, who lives in Sumpter, said the encounter with the bear in his front yard, late on Thanksgiving, left him with scratches on his cheek and above one eye, among other injuries.

During a phone interview on Monday, Beckner said the knuckle of the middle finger on his right hand, the one he used to punch the bear in the eye, was still sore.

So was his shoulder, where the bear briefly bit him.

Beckner said he was wearing multiple layers of clothing, and the bear's teeth didn't penetrate his skin.

The incident happened about 11 p.m. on Thanksgiving, and Beckner said a relative drove him to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City.

He was treated in the emergency room and released.

Beckner, who has lived in Sumpter for about a year and a half, said he's convinced the bear felt cornered when it initially tried to flee and ran into a shed near his front door.

"It didn't want to fight me — it just wanted to leave," Beckner said. "It tried to defend itself, and once it realized it could get away it did."

Brian Ratliff, district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife office in Baker City, said he interviewed Beckner about the episode.

Based on Beckner's description, and in particular that the bear fled as soon as it no longer was confined by the shed, Ratliff said he hasn't set up any traps in Sumpter to try to capture the bear.

Ratliff said he would have taken a different approach if it looked as though the bear had intentionally attacked Beckner.

"It's unfortunate that it happened but the bear didn't seek (Beckner) out and attack him, and it didn't come back," Ratliff said. "It was trying to get away."

Ratliff said the Sumpter incident is the first case of a bear injuring a person that he's been aware of during his 16½ years working for state Fish and Wildlife in Baker County.

Ratliff said he planned to notify the

Sumpter City Council about the incident, and to remind city officials about the need to urge residents to not keep food sources, including coolers or refrigerators, as well as trash, outdoors in places easily accessible to bears.

Ratliff said he will continue to monitor the situation in Sumpter.

"My biggest concern is that this bear is going to choose not to den up," he said.

Ratliff said Beckner described the bear as very skinny — Beckner said that he could see the animal's ribs — which suggests that the bear isn't in condition to hibernate.

Bears aren't uncommon in Sumpter.

The historic gold mining town, population 200, is in the midst of a ponderosa pine forest about 27 miles west of Baker City.

During the late summer and fall of 2017, state Fish and Wildlife officials trapped and killed three bears in or near Sumpter.

During that period, a Sumpter resident shot and injured a bear on his front porch. The same bear later entered a home in Sawmill Gulch near Sumpter through an unlatched door.

That bear was one of the three that state Fish and Wildlife employees trapped and killed.

Ratliff said he's had only a couple reports of bears in Sumpter this year.

"It's nothing like the level that we had a few years back," he said.

Beckner said he's seen bears several times in Sumpter, including near his home on Ixex Street, up the hill and about three blocks east of Mill Street, the town's main thoroughfare.

"Bears are constantly walking through Sumpter, every night," he said.

But Beckner had no reason to think about bears when he walked out his front door in the last hour of Thanksgiving.

He didn't hear anything — he was just going outside.

The bear was about 5 to 6 feet away. "I've seen a fair amount of bears, and I recognized it immediately," Beckner said.

The bear turned and ran, but its route was blocked by a shed that's just outside the front door.

Then it spun and ran toward Beckner. "It slashed at my face but I moved out of the way and it just nicked me," he said.

The bear then stood on its hind legs. Beckner, who is about 5-foot-9, said the bear was slightly taller than he is. He said he "wrestled for a little bit" with

the bear, during which the bear briefly bit his shoulder.

Beckner said he then punched the bear.

He said the bear backed up slightly and, once it realized its path was not blocked by the shed, it ran down the hill.

"I never saw it again after that," he said.

Beckner estimated the incident lasted 45 seconds or so.

Although the bear was emaciated, Beckner, who has competed in wrestling and grappled with opponents up to 250 pounds, said he's "never felt a human so strong as that."

He said he understands that leaving food or trash in accessible places can entice bears, and he strives to avoid such situations on his property.

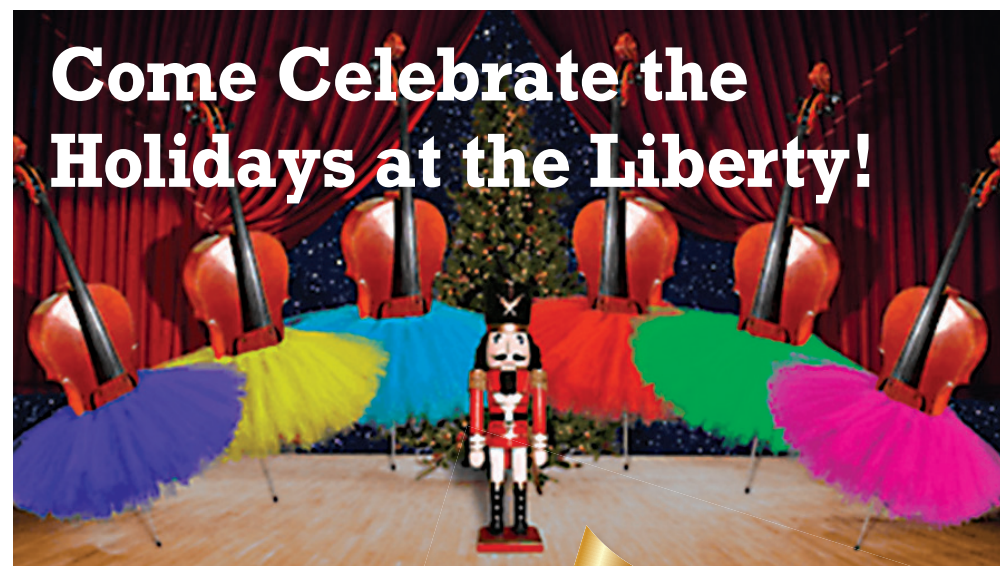
Beckner said he thinks he was simply unlucky, and the incident didn't make him more fearful of bears.

"If it had not been for the fact that it got cornered it wouldn't have attacked me," he said.



Noah Beckner

Noah Beckner sustained wounds to his face when he was attacked by a black bear outside his Sumpter home on Thanksgiving.



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