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REAL ESTATE IN HERMISTON AND PENDLETON

## HOUSE HUNT

### New builds don't keep up with demand in Hermiston

By JADE MCDOWELL  
East Oregonian

Building permits for new homes are being approved every month in Hermiston, but there is still a demand for more housing in the area.

Local real estate agents have seen that reflected in a brisk turnaround time between when many houses are put on the market and when they're sold.

"If you price it right, it will sell very quickly," Lezlee Gonsolley, a broker for Preferred Realty, Inc. said.

Hermiston has been a seller's market for years, but Gonsolley said 2015 was a particularly busy year and so far in 2016 she's seeing a noticeable shortage of inventory across town. That's good news for people looking to sell their home quickly, but it can be frustrating for people looking to buy.

"People say, 'I want to sleep on it,' and the next day there are two other offers besides yours," she said.

The best thing potential home-buyers can do to give them a leg up over competing offers, she said, is to get pre-approved for financing and have a loan approval letter ready to show sellers.

The city awarded building permits for 40 new single-family homes and one duplex in 2015. That number was down from 47 single family dwelling permits in 2014. Since the beginning of 2007 the city of Hermiston awarded building permits for a total 345 new homes and 88 new apartment units, but the city has grown by more than 2,250 people in that same time period.

The real estate website Trulia lists 93 houses and 28 residential lots currently for sale in Hermiston from various sellers.

Builder Luke Pickerill of Bend-based MonteVista Homes, which is currently building new homes in the Highland Summit development, said the demand for new houses is there but a few issues in Hermiston, including difficulty finding subcontractors, has kept the company from being more aggressive. It's hard to bring them from the Tri-Cities, he said, because many Washington contractors don't want to earn the

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

New houses are on the market in the Highland Summit neighborhood in the east side of Hermiston.

### Pendleton looks to new housing to keep its workforce in town

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

While city officials long suspected commuters dominated Pendleton's workforce, it's much larger than some initial estimates.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies, 57.2 percent of the 7,741 people primarily employed in Pendleton live out of town.

That trumps a 2011 housing study that estimated that 30 percent of Pendleton's workforce population commuted from else-

where. After years of stagnation, the city's housing market is starting to see signs of life.

Although the 21 housing permits issued in 2015 is a 45 percent decrease from the year before, it still represents the second highest rate since 2008.

A majority of those housing units were in Pendleton Heights, a planned 72-unit development that started taking residents in 2015.

See PENDLETON/14A

There are currently 24 rental units in the Pendleton Heights housing development with another 72 units in the planning phase. Staff photo by E.J. Harris



## Oregon's marijuana tax returns set record

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's first month of tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales was greater than the first take of any other state so far where recreational sales have been legalized.

The Oregon Department of Revenue reported Thursday that the agency collected about \$3.48 million in recreational cannabis taxes in January.

Although each state's tax structure differs, Oregon's tax receipts exceeded even state economists' expectations, boosted in part by an already robust

medical marijuana industry and a three-month period of sales before the tax took effect.

State economists had projected \$2 million to \$3 million in tax revenue for the first year, after subtracting the cost of regulating the market, said Mazen Malik, senior economist with the Oregon Legislative Revenue Office. His office has yet to calculate the overall cost of regulation, he said.

"It is probably too early to make the conclusion on what is the overall picture out of this first month," Malik said. "Visibility will improve as we go on. It might be that this is the trajectory of these things and we would end up with more money than we thought."

Colorado and Washington were the only states to precede Oregon in collecting taxes on recreational marijuana. Alaska, the only other state where recreational sales are legal, is still writing regulations for the industry.

Washington collected less than \$1.1 million in tax revenue in its first month of recreational sales in July 2014, according to figures from the Washington Liquor and Cannabis Board and the Washington Department of Revenue. The state levied an excise tax of 25 percent at every level of sale from producer to consumer when the recreational program started in 2014. The tax rate now stands at 37 percent only at the consumer level.

Colorado's first month of tax receipts on recreational marijuana in January 2014 totaled more than \$2 million. That state charges an excise tax of 15 percent at the wholesale level and a 12.9 percent sales tax on other recreational marijuana transactions.

While Oregon's revenue on recreational marijuana exceeded expectations, Oregon allowed sales for three months before charging

See POT TAX/14A

### Tax rolls

First month marijuana tax revenue for states after legalizing the drug:  
Oregon ..... \$3.5M  
Colorado ..... \$2M  
Washington ..... \$1.1M

STORK AWARD WINNERS IN UMATILLA COUNTY

## Dispatchers deliver — this time, two babies

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

Kim Winnett was just rolling through another shift on June 30, 2014, as an emergency call-taker in Umatilla County's dispatch center. She handled thefts, domestic violence — the usual calls that day.

Then a frantic man was on her 9-1-1 line with four or five others yelling in the background.

"This was a first-time baby," she said. "There was a lot of shouting going on."

The family was out in the county, miles from a hospital, and the mother was about to give birth. Winnett typed the where and what into the

center's computer system, allowing other dispatchers to see what was happening.

Tracy LeGore worked at the station next to Winnett and overheard the situation. When the call information popped up on the computer display, LeGore told Hermiston to send an ambulance.

Winnett said she stayed on the phone the whole time with the soon-to-be father, while LeGore fed information to the ambulance crew. They estimated the ambulance took as long as seven minutes to reach the family.

Winnett said about the time the crew arrived, the man on the phone yelled, "The baby (is) crowning!"

Then she heard the baby

cry. It was a girl.

Winnett, LeGore and fellow 9-1-1 operator Tabetha Koehler are recent recipients of Stork Award pins from the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials for helping deliver babies in emergency medical instructions. The trio recounted their experiences helping families deliver babies.

LeGore said dispatchers rely on their training to stay calm, as well as a binder of step-by-step instructions for all kinds of emergencies. It includes two pages about how to help deliver a baby.

Koehler's moment came around 7 a.m., Nov. 23, 2015,

See STORK/14A



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A trio of 9-1-1 operators — Kim Winnett, Tracy LeGore and Tabetha Koehler — recently received Stork Awards for helping deliver babies by giving instructions over the phone. The Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials gives the award.

