

Health investment leads growth in Hermiston

Lifeways psychiatric care, Good Shepherd expansion expected to add 70 health jobs

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
EO Media Group

As Hermiston prepares for a wave of public investment in 2017, significant private-sector developments are also on the horizon.

In the spring, Lifeways is set to open a 16-bed acute psychiatric care facility on Linda Avenue in Hermiston.

The facility will allow patients needing the highest level of psychiatric care in a secure facility to be treated in Umatilla County instead of somewhere across the state. It is expected to provide 35 family-wage jobs with an annual operating budget of \$2.8 million when complete.

Good Shepherd Medical Center's \$11 million expansion is set to open

in the fall, and is also expected to add about 35 family-wage jobs to the community.

The former Umatilla Chemical Depot won't be cranking out manufacturing or tech jobs quite yet in 2017, but the Columbia Development Authority expects to receive the depot land from the Army in 2017, opening up some of the most prime industrial land in the state for development.

"I'm optimistic by this time next year the development authority will have full ownership of its portion of the depot," CDA executive director Greg Smith said.

He said a variety of companies have already expressed interest in the property, and called a recent deal with the Army to secure water rights on the land "probably one of the



Partners in a new 16-bed acute psychiatric facility that Lifeways is building in Hermiston participate in a groundbreaking ceremony in July 2016.

EO file photo

biggest economic development wins for Umatilla County and Morrow County for the next 10 years."

The 2017 transfer of the land, at the crossroads of two interstates, a railroad mainline and two ports, has the potential to attract hundreds of new jobs and major construction projects to the Hermiston area over the next few years.

Some new developments in Herm-

iston opened at the tail end of 2016 but will become fully realized in 2017.

The Holiday Inn Express on the corner of Highway 395 and Hermiston Avenue opened some of its 93 rooms on Dec. 7, but the hotel will become fully operational in early 2017.

One of downtown Hermiston's other landmarks — the former RoeMarks building on the corner of Northeast Second Street and

Main Street — became home to the Simmons Insurance Agency in December after an extensive remodel. In January the western portion of the building will also be filled when Bloomz Coffee moves in.

Siki Japanese, a sit-down restaurant offering sushi and traditional Japanese entrees, will fill the former El Cazador building on Eastern Oregon's busiest intersection where Elm Avenue crosses Highway 395.

The former NAPA Auto Parts building on Hermiston Avenue will also be filled with Julissa's Meat Market, which is remodeling the building now with the help of a façade grant from the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency.

Ranch and Home has been taking steps toward building a new 100,000-square-foot store in Hermiston off South Highway 395. In December the Hermiston planning commission approved a replat of the lots there.



Photo courtesy of the Echo School District

A conceptual rendering of a remodeled Echo School.

Schools get busy with construction projects

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
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Umatilla County school districts were four-for-four in their 2016 bond campaigns and will now follow their ballot victories with 2017 construction.

All four districts benefited from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program, a relatively new program that provided them with an extra \$4 million for facility improvements.

The Milton-Freewater Unified School District took home the largest amount of money, using the

state grant, a private grant and a bond issue to raise \$33.4 million for a new elementary school, athletic field and improvements to existing facilities.

To get all of those projects done, Milton-Freewater has a robust construction schedule planned.

Milton-Freewater superintendent Rob Clark said the district has set aside the spring to begin demolishing an old cannery on South Mill Street, to convert the site into the new Gib Olinger Elementary School.

Summer will bring new heating and cooling units for McLoughlin

High School, roofing at Central Middle School and a generator at Ferndale Elementary School.

When the power goes out, we can't flush the toilets," Clark said. "That can spell trouble at an elementary school."

Clark expects Gib Olinger to be ready for the beginning of school in 2018.

The Echo School District has also gotten a quick start on its bond projects.

Echo superintendent Raymon Smith said a revamped front office with better security measures will finish internal renovations within

two weeks and a new bus barn should be completed by the end of the month.

Smith expects the rest of the projects, which includes a 3,000-square-foot expansion and a new façade, to be completed by March 2018.

Athena-Weston School District superintendent Laure Quaresma said many items on the bond package list will be checked off in 2017, including lighting upgrades at Athena Elementary School and new roofing at Weston-McEwen High School, among other things.

Weston Middle School will be

targeted in 2018 and all schools will receive security upgrades.

The Umatilla School District was the only county district that passed a bond in November rather than May, meaning it's still earlier in the planning process than the other three districts.

Umatilla superintendent Heidi Sipe said roofing projects for the district's schools will begin in the spring, but the schedule for the other bond projects, which also includes heating and cooling upgrades, security improvements and an expansion at McNary Heights Elementary School, have yet to be determined.

WILDHORSE: Restaurants, possibly In-n-Out or Five Guys, part of plan

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The new hotel tower won't be an exact clone of the other one. Each story will rise 10 feet, six inches, versus nine feet in the other tower.

"We learned from the first one," George said. "These hotel rooms will be a little larger. They would be outfitted with the latest technology such as charging stations in the nightstands and televisions built into the walls."

A drum-shaped rotunda will link the two towers. The hotel could include a spa, coffee bar and large outdoor sundeck with a pool and cabanas.

The old 1995 hotel will come down to make room for a concert venue to replace the

current Rivers Event Center. The ballroom would seat 1,500 people comfortably, more than twice the number of the current facility, which would be repurposed into additional gaming floor space. The ballroom stage would open to accommodate either inside or outside crowds.

The master plan also includes a new powwow grounds, a five-story parking garage and expansion of the Cineplex. The addition of more screens will allow the theater to play movies longer. Suites with waiter service will be available for private viewing.

The indoor horse arena will seat 2,500 and be large enough to accommodate rodeos. George said they've

discussed the idea of equipping the arena to convert the flooring for other events such as basketball games.

Additional restaurants are a part of the plan, though George didn't yet know specifics. The list could possibly include another high end restaurant, sports bar,

burger place such as In-n-Out Burger or Five Guys Burgers and Fries and a mid-range eating eatery, such as Chilis.

The upgrades will use green energy, George said. Wildhorse has applied to the Energy Trust of Oregon to qualify for energy incentive rebates and is looking at

possibly using geothermal energy.

"Being green is important to the tribes," he said.

George hopes Pendleton and the surrounding communities embrace the changes at Wildhorse, such as increased hotel rooms, restaurants and convention space.

"Sixty percent of people who visit us go into Pendleton to eat and shop," he said. "Some like to stay in town. Our overflow goes to Pendleton."

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