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EAST OREGONIAN

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PENDLETON

J.C. Penney to close downtown store

One of 138 stores nationwide to shut down

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
East Oregonian

After 106 years in the same location, the Pendleton J.C. Penney will close this year.

The department store is one of 138 J.C. Penney locations on a list of closures released Friday. It is the oldest J.C. Penney branch in its original location in the United States. The closure will affect 20 associates in Pendleton.

Gary Vaughn of Jager Development, which owns the building, said that J.C. Penney has had a great run over more than a century in Pendleton

and has been a "class act to work with."

"We're all very sad," he said.

The store has played an important part in downtown Pendleton, Vaughn said, and was successful there. Jager Development is now in the market for a new tenant in the Main Street building that will similarly complement downtown.

Pendleton economic development director Steve Chrisman said he wasn't surprised by the closure, adding that the store has long been at risk.

Chrisman said modern consumers value convenience, meaning online

retailers and shopping centers like Melanie Square are better equipped to attract the high-volume customer base needed to support a large retail brand.

Downtown areas are more suited for specialized stores, Chrisman said, and he was confident the space would be filled again soon.

According to a news release from J.C. Penney Company, Inc., most of the stores being closed will begin liquidation of their inventory on April 17.

The closures affect approximately 5,000 employees across the country. J.C. Penney Company, Inc. announced it "is in the process of

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris
A customer walks into the J.C. Penney store Friday on Main Street in Pendleton.

PENDLETON

Trump budget scraps subsidy for rural flights

Pendleton airport would lose funding for 'essential' service

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Pendleton's commercial air service spent much of 2016 in the frying pan, but 2017 could send it straight into the fire.

President Donald Trump's budget proposal calls for the elimination of the Essential Air Service program, a subsidy that funds daily flights from Pendleton's Eastern Oregon Regional Airport to Portland International Airport.

The reasoning behind the cut — part of a 13 percent decrease in the U.S. Department of Transportation's budget — seemed to disagree with the notion that the subsidy was "essential."

"EAS flights are not full and have high subsidy costs per passenger," the budget proposal states. "Several EAS-eligible communities are relatively close to major airports, and communities that have EAS could be served by other existing modes of transportation."

Trump's staff estimates the federal government could save \$175 million by eliminating the program.

By Friday, officials from the city of Pendleton and its air service provider, Boutique Air, were already pushing back against the proposal.

In an interview, Chrisman explained how the EAS program was created in the wake of the passage of the Airline Deregulation Act in 1978, which no longer required large airlines to funnel traffic through smaller markets like Pendleton.

Today, Pendleton is one of 113 rural

See FLIGHT/12A



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Construction is underway on an expansion of the Amazon data center at the Port of Umatilla on Friday in Umatilla.

BIG DATA BOOM

Amazon plans four new data centers near Hermiston

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

Another batch of data centers is in the works for Umatilla County.

Online retail giant Amazon, which operates two server farms

near Boardman and one near Umatilla, is proposing a third complex west of Hermiston consisting of four additional data centers. The company recently purchased about 120 acres of land between Westland and Cottonwood Bend roads, adja-

cent to the Hermiston Generating Plant near the intersection of interstates 84 and 82.

Data centers arrived on the scene locally in 2011, and since then Amazon — doing business through a holding company called Vadata — has continued

to expand at the Port of Umatilla and Port of Morrow industrial parks along the Columbia River.

Though they look like nondescript warehouses, the buildings are home to racks of computer servers that host everything from email to streaming movies, or in this case, internet shopping. It

See DATA/12A

Umatilla River overflows banks, floods Hermiston park



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Flood waters from the Umatilla River cut a path through the Oxbow Property near Riverfront Park on Friday in Hermiston.

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**
East Oregonian

The lower Umatilla River overflowed its banks at several places late this week, submerging a park and baseball field.

At Hermiston's Riverfront Park, the parking lot, playground, and entrance to the Oxbow Trail were covered in several inches of water Friday morning.

"The park isn't closed, but people have to access it from somewhere other than the parking lot," said parks director Larry Fetter. "The

"The last time there was a flood like this was four years ago when we were building the Oxbow Trail."

— **Larry Fetter**,
Hermiston parks director

last time there was a flood like this was four years ago when we were building the Oxbow Trail."

Fetter said the water was channeling northeast past the parking lot, and cut a corner just to the north of the trail.

He said the flood was inconvenient, but didn't appear to be causing any major damage so far.

"As soon as the water clears,

See FLOOD/3A



More online

For video of the flooded river visit eastoregonian.com



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