

By Emily Olson
EO Media Group

Fair stretches its legs at new venue

Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center

Total acreage: 92
Acres used for fair: 56
Animal barns: Three, totaling 81,060 sq. ft.
Animal stalls: 586
Exhibitor spots: 100
Paved parking spots: 604
ADA-approved restroom facilities: 3

Old Umatilla County fairgrounds

Total acreage: 21
Acres used for fair: 17.5
Animal barns: Five, totaling 26,187 sq. ft.
Animal stalls: 342
Exhibitor spots: 45
Paved parking spots: 0
ADA-approved restroom facilities: 0



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

EOTEC's main event center building opened in May 2016, and will host the county fair for the first time in 2017.

The elephant ears, seed-spitting and mutton bustin' won't be going anywhere. But organizers expect the move to the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center to bring welcome improvements to this year's Umatilla County Fair.

"It's like moving into a new house," said Gay Newman, the fair board chairman. "It's a whole new world for us."

The principal advantage of the new location is space; EOTEC's central 56-acre grounds will allow for a bigger fair, including five more vendors and seven more carnival rides.

Ease of access will also improve, Newman said, citing stroller-friendly asphalt paths and ADA-approved bathrooms. The main hall, which will accommodate commercial vendors and 4-H competitions, will stay cool with air conditioning. Parking, too, will be centralized and simpler, with 604 paved spots and 2,565 overflow spots. All parking will cost \$5. A crew of four tractor-pulled wagons will help fairgoers travel from cars to the ticket gates.

Newman expects the new location's features to contribute to higher weekly attendance than last year's 82,822.

"I think that by next year it will be huge," Newman said.

In this time of transition, there's bound to be some bumps in the road. One known setback is the lack of trees to provide shade. Newman said they're waiting to plant until they've got a better idea of the fair layout. Plus, planting foliage in the heat of summer would give it less chance of survival, he said.

See EOTEC, C22